

If you want to see the history of 2,000 years ago, go to Zhuolu.

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The city offers a great variety of cold noodle options sure to quench any internal fire and please any palate.

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"It's an ordinary part of life for other people, but for me, seeing is a luxury."

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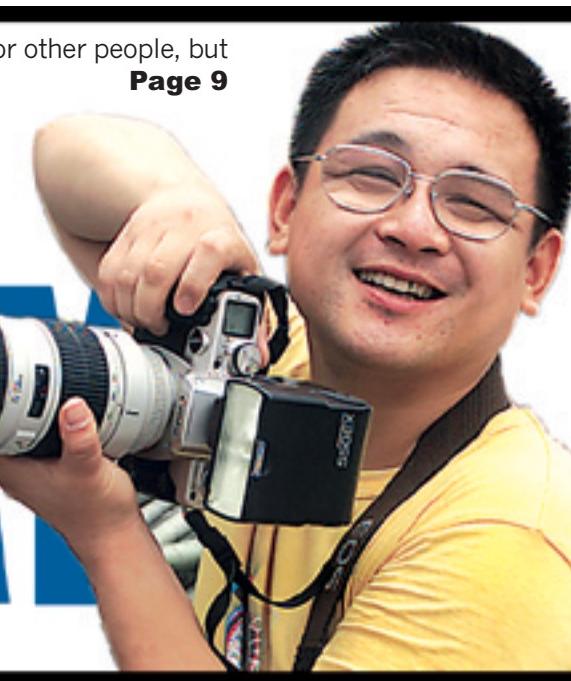
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Chairman Jia Qinglin of China's highest advisory body pledged Wednesday that the organization would give top priority to boosting development by raising proposals and suggestions on issues regarding the national economy and the livelihood of citizens.

This is also the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC)'s aim in its proposed amendment to the organization's charter, Jia said in his report on the work of the Standing Committee of the 10th National Committee of CPPCC, which opened in Beijing Wednesday afternoon.

In-depth investigations have been conducted and opinions solicited from a broad range of society in drafting the amendment, he told the annual gathering of more than 2,000 members.

The CPPCC's main functions are to

Two Top Bodies Convene

conduct political consultation, exercise supervision and participate in the discussion and handling of state affairs, mainly through setting forth proposals and suggestions.

Reviewing the work over the past year, Jia said the participating parties, special committees and members of the CPPCC National Committee made in-depth investigations and studies on major issues of the country's social and economic development and, on this basis, submitted 22 inspection reports, 37 survey reports and 114 written suggestions to the central authorities.

Premier Wen Jiabao and vice premiers have highlighted the importance

of these reports, and some ministers of the State Council will reply to questions raised by CPPCC members and committee members during the 10-day session.

In a report on proposals, Li Meng, vice chairman of the CPPCC National Committee, said that CPPCC members have tabled a total of 3,819 proposals over the past year, most of which have been transferred to relevant government departments.

"Some 98.8 percent of the proposals had been handled up to February 20 this year," he said.

Jia urged CPPCC members to concentrate their studies on major government policies and issues of major

concern in society and make relevant suggestions for resolving problems arising from social and economic development so as to help enhance social stability.

On the Taiwan issue, Jia reiterated continued efforts to carry out the basic principle of "peaceful reunification and one country, two systems" to promote the reunification of the motherland.

In the following days, members of the CPPCC National Committee are expected to adopt the amendment to the organization's charter and a political resolution of the session.

Meanwhile a 175-member presidium for the Second Session of the 10th

National People's Congress (NPC), which begins today, was formed at a preparatory meeting attended by 2,747 NPC deputies here yesterday morning.

The agenda of the 10-day session was adopted at the preparatory meeting, presided over by Chairman Wu Bangguo of the 10th NPC Standing Committee.

NPC deputies will hear and deliberate reports on government work, the budget and the socio-economic development plan, and approve the draft amendments to the country's constitution.

(Xinhua)

Restoration on Home of Kung Fu Kicks Off

By Shan Jinliang

Henan's Shaolin Temple, the spiritual home of kung fu, is undergoing a major renovation, aimed at restoring it to the splendor it has not seen since the Ming Dynasty.

The facelift is scheduled to be largely complete by October 1. With a budget of 40 million yuan, it follows a major refurbishment by the local government concluded in 1999.

Located in Dengfeng, Henan Province, Shaolin Temple is one of China's, if not the world's, best known temples.

Following the release of the popular Jet Li movie, simply called *Shaolin Temple*, in 1982, the number of visitors to the temple started to increase dramatically. With the Henan provincial government, the Zhengzhou government and the local Dengfeng government all administering the temple and scenic area, the region soon became crowded with newly built shops, hotels and kung fu schools.

In April 2002, in an attempt to reverse the effects of over-commercialization and urbanization, the Dengfeng government invited submission of plans for the redesign of Shaolin Temple Scenic Spot.

The restoration project aims to protect the cultural relics, while at the same time, helping to improve tourism

Sad reflection of former glory

Shaolin Temple was established in the Northern Wei Dynasty in 495. It rose to prominence during the Southern and Northern Dynasties period, the Tang Dynasty and again in the Ming Dynasty, before falling into a period of decline during the Qing Dynasty, which banned the practice of martial arts.

In 1928, warlord Shi Yousan set fire to the temple, destroying several of the major buildings as well as scores of Buddhist statues and other cultural relics. Prior to the 1980s, only two of the temple's original major buildings remained, namely Shanmen Dian, or the Gateway Hall, and Lixue Pavilion.

While the six halls along the main axis of the temple and the Bell and Drum towers were renovated or rebuilt during the 1980s and '90s, the work was done largely without reference to historical materials.

Shi Yongxin, the abbot of the temple, told *Beijing Today* in a telephone interview last Wednesday, "The buildings con-

structed during the past 20 years are of rough craftwork and could not represent the spirit of Shaolin Temple. They should be torn down."

Meanwhile the large numbers of visitors to the temple's Residence Courtyard regularly threaten to interrupt the kung fu practice of the monks and some people have donated money to erect steles in the stele forest, which detract from the historical value of the old steles.

"Visitors frequently complain, 'It is a pity not to visit the Shaolin Temple, and it is even more of a pity to visit it,'" Li Chuanzhe, the chief engineer responsible for the temple's current restoration project told *Beijing Today* last Thursday.

Restoration

In October 2003, the Dengfeng government invited bids for a plan to restore the temple. The bid was won by Guo Diheng, who studied under renowned architect Liang Sicheng, and her team from Tsinghua University.

The plan was approved by the Henan Provincial Bureau of Cultural Relics on February 16, and trial renovation work began two days later on Lixue Pavilion.

The restoration project aims to protect the cultural relics, while at the same time, helping to improve tourism, Li told *Beijing Today*. Since the Shaolin Temple was added to and modified from dynasty to dynasty, the renovation work

has to be done according to records from the Ming and Qing dynasties. Newly discovered historical materials, such as old photos unearthed in Japan, provide the basis for the construction work, and two new halls will be constructed based on recently excavated foundations.

The restoration of the temple's Residence Courtyard involves 11 separate items, including maintenance of Lixue Pavilion and Guanyin Temple. The 320-square-meter mural in the Hall of Arhats will be the primary focus, Shi said in an interview with Xinhua on February 22.

The Forest of Pagodas, located to the west of the temple, is the site of over 200 memorial pagodas dedicated to abbots and monks of the temple. The square in front of the forest will be cleared and the parking lot that currently occupies part of the area will be relocated.

Guo told *Beijing Youth Daily* on February 22 that the bed of the Shaolin River, which flows in front of the temple's main gate, will be rechanneled and turned

northward to prevent flooding in summer.

In the past, the Forest of Steles was administered by an assortment of groups, including the local tourism administration, the temple itself and even some local travel agencies, according to Abbot Shi. It was not until the late 1990s that the temple regained full authority over it. He said all the recently added steles would be removed from the temple, and no new ones would be allowed.

With the exception of a few administrators, all the monks at the temple will move into new residences, better equipped for the practice of kung fu, but the move "will not preclude contact with visitors," said Zhang Binyuan, chief of the Henan Province Cultural Relics Administration in a telephone interview with *Beijing Today* on Monday.

Zhang added that the entire plan had not yet been finalized. Currently only Lixue Pavilion was in the process of being restored.

With little government finance, the restoration work will be primarily funded by the temple's tourism company, the temple itself and local banks, said Abbot Shi. Although the Dengfeng government had promised full support, he had no concerns about financing the project.

Work in progress

China News Agency reported on January 31 that the facelift would be completed before October 1, in time for the International Kung Fu Festival in Zhengzhou, capital of Henan Province. Abbot Shi, however clarified this, stating, "Renovation of the Shaolin Temple Scenic Spot will be generally completed before October, but restoration of the Shaolin Temple itself will take longer. Most of the work should be done by then, but we will not speed up the work at the cost of construction quality. This project is not a gift to the city government!"

"After its facelift, the temple will be a pleasant place with clean and quiet environment," Li Chuanzhe told *Beijing Today*, "it will double its former tourism capacity, and be accessible to the handicapped."

Last June, the Dengfeng government decided to apply for World Heritage Site listing for the Forest of Pagodas at Shaolin Temple.

However as far as the abbot is concerned, monks are more important than the pagodas. "Shaolin monks, as the inheritors of Shaolin kung fu for over 1,500 years, are more important than cultural relics," said Shi.

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A worker wraps a statue of Patriarch Hui Ke in protective material as restoration work begins on Lixue Pavilion.

Photo by Zhu Xiang

Six-party Talks Conclude

By Yu Shanshan

The second round of the six-party talks on the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue ended Saturday afternoon with the six delegations reaching consensus on setting up a working group and the next round of talks.

The talks, which began on Wednesday last week, involved the United States, China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea, Russia and Japan, and focused on the goal of a

nuclear-free Korean Peninsula.

The consensus "is of great importance in pushing forward the process of dialogue," Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing said at the closing ceremony at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse Saturday.

"Some people may think that not enough progress was made, and the talks did not go fast enough," Li said, "but in my opinion, the achievements were hard-won and worth valuing, considering that this round of talks started when mutual trust

was lacking among relevant sides and their differences were growing. The achievements are the fruit of the parties' tireless efforts and reflect their political will to push forward the peace process."

The six countries agreed to take coordinated steps to address the nuclear issue and address the related concerns. The agreement was presented as the chairman's statement.

"The parties expressed their commitment to a nuclear-weapon-free

Korean Peninsula, and to resolving the nuclear issue peacefully through dialogue," the statement said.

"The parties agreed to continue the process of the talks and agreed in principle to hold the third round of the Six-party talks in Beijing no later than the end of the second quarter of 2004. They agreed to set up a working group in preparation for the plenary. The terms of reference of the working group will be established through diplomatic channels," it said.

China and US Cooperate in Fight Against AIDS

By Chen Si

China and the United States have launched a joint project to fight AIDS in ten Chinese provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions.

The Global AIDS Program, initiated by the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention, was launched here Tuesday with a promised US \$15 million investment from the US side.

The Global AIDS Program aims to provide information and technology to help the health departments in the provinces of Heilongjiang, Shandong, Henan, Anhui, Guangdong and Guizhou, Beijing Municipality, and the Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang Uygur and Tibet autonomous regions to improve their ability to prevent the spread of AIDS.

The 2003 statistics from the Ministry of Health estimate that more than 840,000 Chinese people are HIV-carriers, of whom 80,000 are AIDS patients.

Vice-minister of health Wang Longde said the active measures adopted by the international community to combat AIDS were conducive to containing its spread.

The move follows the State Council's establishment on February 26 of a committee to prevent and curb the spread of AIDS. Addressing the committee's first meeting, Vice-premier Wu Yi said, "China should increase its sense of urgency in its efforts to prevent and curb the disease across the country. AIDS has been on the rise in China, and it will have grave impact on the country's economic and social development and social stability unless it is brought under control."

China will continue to implement its policies to offer free anti-virus treatment to AIDS victims who are farmers or the needy in urban areas, and provide free, anonymous blood tests for people in areas hit by the disease.

In addition, local governments will offer free AIDS consultations, screenings and anti-virus treatment to pregnant women in designated areas in an effort to reduce AIDS transmission from mothers to their babies, and provide assistance to needy AIDS patients.



Despite the lower prices, there has been no obvious increase in sales at TSE, according to manager Helen Zhou.

Photo by Jia Ting

Duty-free Goods from HK on Sale in Beijing

By Wang Xiaoxiao

The first shipment of duty-free, made-in-Hong Kong goods arrived in Beijing last Thursday. The duty-free status of the goods is a result of the Mainland-Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA), which took effect on January 1, 2004.

The goods, garments with a combined value of US \$2,752, have now gone on sale at TSE, a shop at Beijing's Oriental Plaza. Zheng Zhiwei, director of the import and export department of China New Era, the importer of these goods, told Xinhua last Friday that the pre-CEPA tariff was 14 to 18 per-

cent, and the exemption on this shipment was worth 4,300 yuan.

The garments, which retail for 3,000 to 4,000 yuan, are selling for 10 to 20 percent less than they would have done prior to CEPA. Store manager Helen Zhou told *Beijing Today* that the prices are nearly the same as in Hong Kong.

McDonald's Renews Olympic Sponsorship



By Sun Ming

McDonald's announced the renewal of its worldwide Olympic Partnership from 2006 to 2012 in Beijing last Thursday.

It is the first time that McDonald's has renewed its sponsorship for four consecutive Games.

McDonald's will extend its Olympic sponsorship to include the 2006 winter games in Turin, Italy; the 2008 summer games in Beijing; the 2010 winter games in Vancouver, Canada; and the 2012 summer games, whose venue has not yet been named.

"McDonald's has been a proud Olympic partner for nearly three decades because we believe in the spirit and ideals of the Games," said Jim Cantalupo, McDonald's chairman and CEO, at a news conference last Thursday in Beijing.

McDonald's did not reveal the value of the deal, saying only that it was "significant."

Other global Olympic sponsors include Coca-Cola, Atos Origin (formerly Schlumberger), General Electric, John Hancock, Kodak, Panasonic, Samsung, Swatch and Visa.

Beijing to Build Two More Churches

Two more churches will be built in the Chinese capital this year, Yu Xinli, a priest of the Beijing Christian Council, said Tuesday.

The Christian churches, each covering around 2,000 square meters and capable of accommodating 1,000 people, will be set up in areas easily accessible by public transportation in Chaoyang and Fengtai districts.

The construction plan received approval from the municipal government at the end of last year, said Yu, a senior Christian priest.

The church in Chaoyang will look like a square-shaped ancient castle with a bell tower while the one in Fengtai will be a quite modern building with two domes. "As for the Fengtai church, we hope it's an original design and will not be outdated in 50 years," Yu said.

"We really expect the Christians to have a nice and divine feeling in them," said Cui Tong, chief designer of the churches.

The designers paid attention to every detail about the space, color and light in

the buildings, and even went to look at churches in Europe for reference, said Cui, also the chief architect with the

Building Design Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

The projects will cost 40 million yuan. After completion, they will be among the largest Christian churches in Beijing.

Yu said that people from the religious circle and local Christians and believers are very pleased about the new churches. It will be more convenient for the local believers to participate in Christian rituals and activities upon completion of the two churches.

Chaoyang and Fengtai have 2,000 and 3,500 Christians respectively. Beijing currently has over 40,000 Christians, 60 clergy and eight Christian churches.

Lots of church property in the city was renovated or rebuilt in the past few years. Many of the buildings are cultural relics which have gained financial support from the cultural relics administration for their protection and maintenance. (*Xinhua News*)

China and Kazakhstan Establish Free Trade Zone

By Yu Shanshan

The Ministry of Commerce confirmed Sunday that China's first free trade zone will be established along the border with Kazakhstan.

The China-Kazakhstan free border-trade zone will lie between Yili Kazak Autonomous Prefecture, in Xinjiang, and Alma-ata, Kazakhstan.

During a visit to Kazakhstan in June last year by President Hu Jintao, the president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, proposed for the fourth time to his Chinese counterpart the plan to build a free trade zone along the border of the two countries.

Tong Zhiguang, director of the WTO's China National Institute, attributed the establishment of the free trade zone to China's WTO membership and closer economic ties between members of the Shanghai Cooperative Organization. He said the China-Kazakhstan free border-trade zone would lay a good foundation for China's enterprises and products to enter the central and west Asian and European markets.

Kazakhstan. China has offered 130 hectares while Kazakhstan has contributed 70 hectares for the free trade zone.

According to Jia, the Chinese side is mapping out a plan for the free trade zone, and the scheme of Sino-Kazakhstan free trade zone put forward by China has received a positive response from Kazakhstan. Under the plan, the zone would allow for zero tariffs and the free flow of people and goods.

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Public Security Review

According to Beijing's 110 emergency hotline service, thefts accounted for almost 80 percent of criminal cases reported last week. Most of these were break-ins and auto thefts. A total of 174 people suspected of committing crimes were apprehended.

Break-ins mainly occurred in Chaoyang and Haidian districts late at night or in the early morning. Auto thefts mainly occurred at night in Jinsong, Jiuxianqiao, Taiyanggong, Sijiqing, Liuliquiao, Lugouqiao and other areas of Chaoyang, Haidian and Fengtai districts.

(Information from Beijing Public Security Bureau)

Beijing Capital Airport to Get Third Terminal

Beijing's Capital Airport has announced construction of a third terminal of the Beijing Airport would break ground on March 28 as scheduled.

The Beijing Architectural Design Institute has been working on the design of the new terminal, said a spokesman for the company, who disclosed that builders of the new terminal were to be chosen via public bidding.

The projected terminal will be completed and put into operation before 2007. With the completion of the third terminal, the Capital Airport will be capable of handling 60 million journeys, plus 500,000 to 600,000 flights, as well as 2 million to 3 million tons of cargo and mail a year.

The airport handled 24.36 million journeys, accomplished 2.18 billion yuan (263 million US dollars) in operating revenue and made a profit of 380 million yuan last year. (*Xinhua News*)

First National Economic Census Starts in Beijing

By Yu Shanshan

The first national economic census was launched in Beijing last Saturday, as part of China's national economic census that is to be conducted from this year at five-yearly intervals, according to Cui Shuang, director of Beijing Bureau of Statistics.

The national economic census leading team conference last Wednesday revealed that the census is designed to acquire an economic panorama of China's secondary and tertiary industries and to complete the database that covers all economic sectors.

The census's content includes the logo of enterprises, employee details, and summaries of income, assets, management and production capability of companies, their consumption of raw and other materials, and investment on scientific and technological development.

According to Cui, as well as secondary and tertiary industries, the survey also includes the construction industry and individual entrepreneurs.

US Starts New Visa Procedure

By Wang Xiaoxiao

The US embassy in Beijing announced the commencement of its China-wide Visa Information Call center Wednesday, marking the implementation of new non-immigrant visa policies.

The call center provides visa-related information to applicants and schedules interview appointments at the embassy and four US consulates in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai and Shenyang.

The number for the Visa Information Call Center is 4008-872-333 and costs 54 yuan per 12 minutes. Payment can be made with a credit or debit card or with a money order or postal note.

Other payment options are being explored and will be made available as soon as possible.

According to the new visa policy, foreign students and other visa applicants now require a special security clearance, which is expected to slow the granting of visas.

Health Food Association Scrapped

By Shan Jinliang

The State Council shut down the Health Food Association of China last Tuesday because of its illegal charges on ranking and other illegal operations. The duties of the former association have been taken over by the newly established China Health Care Association (CHA), formally known as the China Health Care Science Technology Society.

The Health Food Association was set up in 1985 under the authority of the State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine. It published its first national health food industry ranking in August 2001, and in the following two years the association continued to publish the ranking, illegally charging fees to participants and giving inaccurate rankings, according to the State Council.

The China Health Care Science Technology Society was established under the Ministry of Health in 1988. The two agencies both claimed to be the industry authority and with the support of favored companies, competed for dominance of the lucrative rating market.

In January 2003, in an effort to prevent industry disorder, the government started to merge the two associations. However in June 2003, the Health Food Association published a national health food product ranking, for which health food producers had paid between 2,000 and 12,000 yuan to secure a favorable listing.

The illegal activity was exposed on CCTV's *Jiadian Fangtan* (Focus Talk) and in October 2003, two senior administration officials in charge of the association were discharged.

Minsheng Listing in Question



Minsheng Bank President Dong Wenbiao

Company admits to forging of important document in 2000

By Shan Jinliang

China's only private shareholding bank, Minsheng Banking Corp., reaffirmed its determination to list on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange despite recent charges of fraud. Former director Qiu Yingxin has accused the bank of forging his signature on a document necessary to Minsheng's listing on the Shanghai Stock Exchange in 2000.

At Wednesday's meeting of the National People's Political Consultative Conference, Minsheng President Dong Wenbiao told the press that the charges would not affect the bank's preparations for its Hong Kong IPO. Late last year, Minsheng announced it hoped to collect up to \$1 billion from listing on the Hong Kong market and that it had hired Citigroup, Deutsche Bank AG and Goldman Sachs Group to serve as the main underwriters for the offering.

Qiu Yingxin issued a public statement on February 16 that the bank had falsified his signature and that of other executives on documents supposedly generated at a shareholders meeting held to approve the

bank's change of name from China Minsheng Bank to China Minsheng Banking Corp. In fact, that meeting was never held and all related documents were fabricated.

Four days later, Minsheng issued a statement admitting that bank staff had concocted the resolution in question on May 30, 2000, in order to speed up the listing process, but did not comment on the forging of Qiu's signature. The bank stated it would punish the employees involved.

According to another statement released on Minsheng's website last Friday, an investigation committee led by the bank's independent directors has been established to look into the incident.

At the Wednesday meeting, Dong said, "I think this problem should not affect the bank's listing in Hong Kong, since the issue was dealt with in 1999 before the bank's listing in Shanghai. Since our establishment, Minsheng has hired international accounting firms to provide performance reports and, in particular, we invited foreign firms to handle our IPO in Hong Kong. We have completed all required procedures for

issuing our IPO and the listing will continue as planned."

Dong was referring to the fact that the name change had already been approved by the shareholders at a meeting in 1999, a decision about which the erring employees apparently were unaware when they forged the document.

The bank's foreign underwriters have not issued any comments on the controversy.

Dong said he hoped the bank would be able to hold its IPO in Hong Kong within the first half of this year. However, the *Wall Street Journal* reported on February 21 that the Hong Kong Stock Exchange would conduct extra-strict checks of the bank's qualifications, likely slowing the process.

Jones Ng, president of the Beijing branch of Hong Kong-based Bank of East Asia told the *21st Century Business Tribune* last Friday that the event would affect the reputation of Chinese banks and could have a negative impact on the ongoing drives by the four major state-owned banks to list on markets in Hong Kong and New York.

Lenovo Lines Up for 2008 Olympic Partnership

By Shan Jinliang

Giant domestic computer maker Lenovo Group is ready to sign a \$80 million deal with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to become an Olympic Partner (TOP) for the 2008 Games in Beijing, according to a report in Shanghai-based *Youth Daily* last Thursday.

At a press conference in Beijing on Wednesday, Lenovo spokesperson Wang Guixin did not deny that report, but only said the company was looking for an appropriate role in the 2008 Olympics, not necessarily meaning TOP membership. She added that in 2001, the computer maker had already donated 120 million yuan to support Beijing's bid to host the Games.

The IOC allows for there to be 10 TOP companies for each Olympics. Nine positions for the 2008 Games have already gone to Coca-cola, Kodak, Swatch, Schlumberger, John Hancock, Samsung, General Motors, Panasonic and Visa. A few large domestic companies pushing for status on the global market, such as Qingdao-based Haier and local enterprises Lenovo and Yantai, are currently in heated competition for the coveted tenth slot.

According to Cai Junwu, marketing consultant to the Beijing Olympic Organizing Committee, Lenovo is the frontrunner among the domestic competitors. According to an article in *Shenzhen Commercial Daily* last Friday, as of yet, there is no official partner for the supply of information and timing systems, a service traditionally provided by a TOP, for the 2008 Olympics.

Cai said, "TOP companies pay around \$65 million for the privilege. However, the exact figures for sponsorship rights are not disclosed."

Lenovo launched its internationalization strategy in mid-2003 and its targets call for the company to achieve a global annual sales volume of \$10 billion by 2010. Overseas sales currently account for less than 10 percent of the company's revenues. Company President Yang Yuanqing said last year that the company was aiming to raise that proportion to 25 to 30 percent in the next three to five years.

While Lenovo runs headlong towards TOP status, some Chinese industry analysts are urging domestic companies exercise caution. Xie Kang, researcher at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, told *Youth Daily* last Thursday, "TOP status is both an opportunity and a trap for domestic companies."

He noted that Lenovo's annual sales volume of under \$3 billion pales in comparison to the \$70 billion and \$40 billion in annual sales of established TOPs Panasonic and Samsung. Xie argued that domestic companies should be more concerned about improving their performance than making massive investments on advertising campaigns.

Sunrana Buys Snoopy Rights



UFS has already sold the rights to Snoopy brand clothes and other products in the China market.

By Tony Shaw

A domestic cosmetics firm's decision to promote a foreign brand has been raising eyebrows as many Chinese cosmetics labels are being acquired by overseas counterparts such as L'Oréal.

Last November, Zhuhai, Guangdong Province-based cosmetic producer Sunrana was granted exclusive rights to making and marketing Snoopy brand cosmetic products in the China market. The cosmetics label is owned by US-based United Feature Syndicate (UFS). The deal was sealed after four years of negotiations between the two sides.

Sunrana executive Zhai Wanru told *Guangzhou Daily* on Monday that his company held the right to make Snoopy products for an extended period, adding that UFS would check the operation of the brand in China every two years.

On Tuesday, Zhai told *Beijing Times* that Sunrana would divide its Snoopy cosmetics into four categories of products specifically targeted at babies, toddlers, children and adults. The company plans to make over 300 items in 17 product lines.

The company told the press on Tuesday that the first batch of its domestically-made Snoopy products would be aimed at young customers between the ages of 15 and 26. Sales will start before May 1 and new products for the autumn and winter seasons will be released in August.

According to the *Guangzhou Daily* report, industry analysts expect the Snoopy cosmetic product line could generate a sales volume of 60 million yuan this year.

McDonald's Price Cut to Challenge KFC?

By David Huang/Yang Qing

On February 23, fast food chain McDonald's launched price cuts of up to 5 yuan on several of its popular products. The campaign, set to run through August 24, is widely believed to represent a new push by McDonald's to challenge KFC, its primary rival in the China market.

The price cuts apply to filet-o-fish and double cheeseburger sandwiches, sundaes, small French fries and other products.

Beijing McDonald's Food Co. has called the move the first phase in its new nationwide promotional cam-

paign. The company announced that another promotion would be launched on August 25 but did not disclose any details about the second phase.

According to a report in *Beijing Youth Daily* on Monday, sources close to McDonald's said the price cuts were not set by McDonald's China but by its US headquarters and only apply to the 600 McDonald's restaurants in this country.

The same day the price cuts were announced, KFC publicized the launch of a new barbecued pork chop sandwich in the seven domestic cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou,

Shenzhen, Suzhou, Hangzhou and Wuxi. Sales of the product are set to start on Monday.

Zhang Jianzhong, assistant to the general manager of KFC Beijing, told the press last week that his company was not ready to comment on its rival's price cuts, but did say that KFC would maintain a cautious product pricing policy.

The *Beijing Youth Daily* article speculated the price cuts could be intended to seize market share from KFC, which has been struggling in China under the effects of public fear about bird flu.

HSBC Running RMB Business for Domestic Companies

The Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corp. has started to offer Renminbi services to non-foreign-invested companies in China's interior regions.

Last Thursday, HSBC's Shanghai Branch launched RMB services, including the extension of RMB loans and issuance of letters of credits, to non-overseas-invested enterprises, mainly state firms and private enterprises, in the two coastal provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang and 13 mainland cities.

Those cities are Shanghai, Shenzhen, Dalian, Tianjin, Guangzhou, Zhuhai, Qindao, Nanjing, Wuhan, Jinan, Fuzhou, Chengdu and Chongqing, according to HSBC Chief Executive of China Business Dicky Yip.

Three other overseas financial institutions have been approved by the China Banking Regulatory Commission to start trial RMB services, including New York-based Citibank, Hong Kong's Bank of East Asia and Japan's Mizuho Bank. Previously, foreign banks were only allowed to offer RMB business to foreign-invested enterprises.

"It's a major step (for China) to open its market after entering the World Trade Organization," Yip said.

China became a full member of the WTO in 2001.

HSBC is the first overseas financial institution to launch Renminbi business for Chinese-invested companies in the interior regions.

HSBC branches in Shenzhen, Qingdao, Tianjin, Dalian, Wuhan and Guangzhou had also applied to offer Renminbi services to local firms, Yip said.

He said the bank was expected to do the same in Beijing in December, when the capital is scheduled to allow overseas banks to conduct RMB business.

HSBC launched foreign currency services for domestic companies in April 2002. (Xinhua)

S&P Makes First Foray into A-share Indices

The launch of the S&P/CITIC index series on March 1 marked Standard & Poor's first shot at developing A-share indices in China in partnership with a local financial institution.

The indices, named S&P/CITIC 300 and S&P/CITIC 50, were jointly developed by Standard & Poor's and CITIC Securities Co.

The first is a benchmark index composed of 300 A-share companies with large capitalization and good liquidity in a diversified range of industries, while the second is intended as more of an investment guide that tracks the movements of the 50 large-capped blue chips.

Critical need has emerged for a comprehensive benchmark to accurately track the China market, said Robert A. Shakatto, Standard & Poor's managing director of index services.

Standard & Poor's has used its global indexing methodology in constructing the S&P/CITIC indices. A joint venture will be established between the company and CITIC Securities to independently operate the indices, according to Shakatto.

CITIC Securities Chairman Wang Dongming said the two sides would increase co-operation in the future and develop new products like index funds, exchange-traded funds and index futures.

Harvest Fund Management and Great Wall Fund Management announced decisions Monday to make the new indices the bases for the development of their own index funds.

Apart from the indices issued by the two stock exchanges in China, some financial institutions have also developed indices tracking A shares or B shares over the past few years, including the Xinhua / FTSE index series that were jointly developed by Xinhua Financial Network and the FTSE Group. (Xinhua)

China Telecom May Bring in \$1 Billion from Stock, Bonds

China's biggest fixed-line phone company, China Telecom, said on Tuesday it may raise as much as \$1 billion selling stock and bonds to help finance its business.

The sale may include new Class H shares, which are traded in Hong Kong, American depositary shares and bonds that can be converted into the company's stock.

China Telecom paid \$5.6 billion in cash last year to buy six provincial phone networks from its state-owned parent.

It has also held talks to buy more networks from China Telecommunications Corporation. The purchases could be worth as much as \$7.7 billion. (CRI)

EU Imposes Sanctions on US Goods

Brussels, February 29 (FT) - For the first time in the history of transatlantic trade relations, the European Union will on Monday impose trade sanctions on US goods, in an attempt to force Washington lawmakers to repeal controversial corporate tax breaks.

EU customs officials will levy an additional 5 percent tariff on a wide range of American products. The duty on imports of natural honey, for example, will rise from 17.3 percent to 22.3 percent. Roller skates will be subject to a 7.7 percent duty, up from 2.7 percent.

The punitive tariffs will also apply to textiles, agricultural products, steel and glass, books and newspapers, sugar and toys – even nuclear reactors. And they will rise, by 1 percentage point each month, until they affect US exports worth \$666 million a year.

The aim is to force the US Congress to change the foreign sales corporation provision (FSC), which grants tax

breaks to US exporters and was ruled illegal by the World Trade Organisation in 2002.

But to John Disharoon, vice president of the trade committee at the American chamber of commerce to the EU, Monday is simply "a sad day for trade relations between the US and Europe". He says: "Nobody wants to see sanctions. It adds to the negative climate."

European companies share some of Mr Disharoon's concerns. But according to one trade expert, there is "no sense of disaster" among European trade officials, business lobbies and observers.

The European Commission is keen to play down the significance of the trade sanctions. It insists that Brussels has shown patience and diplomacy in the run-up to March 1, and that Washington as well as US companies have had ample warning and enough time to prepare for the sanctions.

"We've been extremely patient, but

there is no way now we can avoid these sanctions, which hopefully will concentrate a few minds on the urgency of this legislation," Pascal Lamy, EU trade commissioner, told reporters in Washington on Friday following two days of meetings with US lawmakers. He added: "The day the necessary legislation is there, I will remove the sanctions." Officials close to Mr Lamy have argued for months that there would be no backlash from US lawmakers.

Analyst's Take:

In the last two years, frictions between the US and Europe have been increasing on politics, trade and diplomacy. How to mend the transatlantic rift has become a hot topic.

The sanctions imposed by the EU are a heavy blow to the Bush administration for the following reasons.

First, it will cause US export trade to deteriorate. At present, the US and

Europe are each other's main trade partner. In 2002, EU exports to the US were worth 240 billion euros while the imports were worth 176 billion euros. So the retaliatory measures taken by the EU will greatly affect US export trade this year. In recent years, the US foreign trade deficit has been rising rapidly. In 2002, the deficit totaled US\$489 billion. In 2003, the sharp depreciation of the US dollar against the euro helped exports of US goods and the deficit increase thus slowed down. However, the retaliatory tariffs imposed on the US goods will offset this benefit.

Second, the retaliatory measures may threaten Bush's reelection for a second term as president. The longer it takes for the US Congress to pass new legislation, the less favorable the situation will become for Bush.

– Yang Liming, professor, school of commerce, Renmin University

Interbrew, AmBev Link Up

Brussels, Belgium, March 3 (AP) - Brewing giant Interbrew of Belgium announced plans Wednesday to take a controlling stake in AmBev of Brazil in a stock and debt swap deal to create the world's largest brewer.

The new firm, InterbrewAmbev, would have a global market share of approximately 14 percent, combined revenue of \$11.9 billion and pretax earnings of \$3 billion, according to an Interbrew statement.

Interbrew will issue 141.7 million new Interbrew shares for 100 percent of Braco S.A., a Brazilian holding company for the current interests of a group of AmBev's controlling shareholders.

AmBev will issue 9.5 billion AmBev ordinary shares and 13.8 billion preferred shares to Interbrew and assume debt of \$1.5 billion in exchange for Interbrew's wholly owned Canadian subsidiary Labatt, including its 30 percent interest in Femsa Cerveza SA de CV and its 70 percent interest in Labatt USA. Labatt will be merged into AmBev.

InterbrewAmbev will be headquartered in Leuven and traded on the Brussels exchange, while AmBev will continue to be a publicly traded company on the Brazilian and the New York stock exchange.



The CEO of AmBev Carlos Brito (R) and Co-President Vitorio Carlos de Marchi pose during a press conference in Sao Paulo, March 3, 2004. AP Photo

Wal-Mart Buys Bompoco

New York, March 1 (Dow Jones) - Wal-Mart Stores Inc. acquired Bompoco, a 118-unit retail chain, for \$300 million from Royal Ahold N.V., giving it its first stores in the Northeast Brazil market.

In a press release Monday, Wal-Mart said the purchase includes hypermarkets, supermarkets and mini markets employing more than 20,000 employees, who will join Wal-Mart Brazil.

Separately, Ahold said it is also selling Hipercard, Bompoco's credit card manager and one of Brazil's leading credit card companies, to Unibanco SA for \$200 million.

Hipercard will continue to be accepted in all Bompoco stores.

Ahold, which put its Brazil assets on the block last year, plans to use proceeds from the two sales to reduce debt.

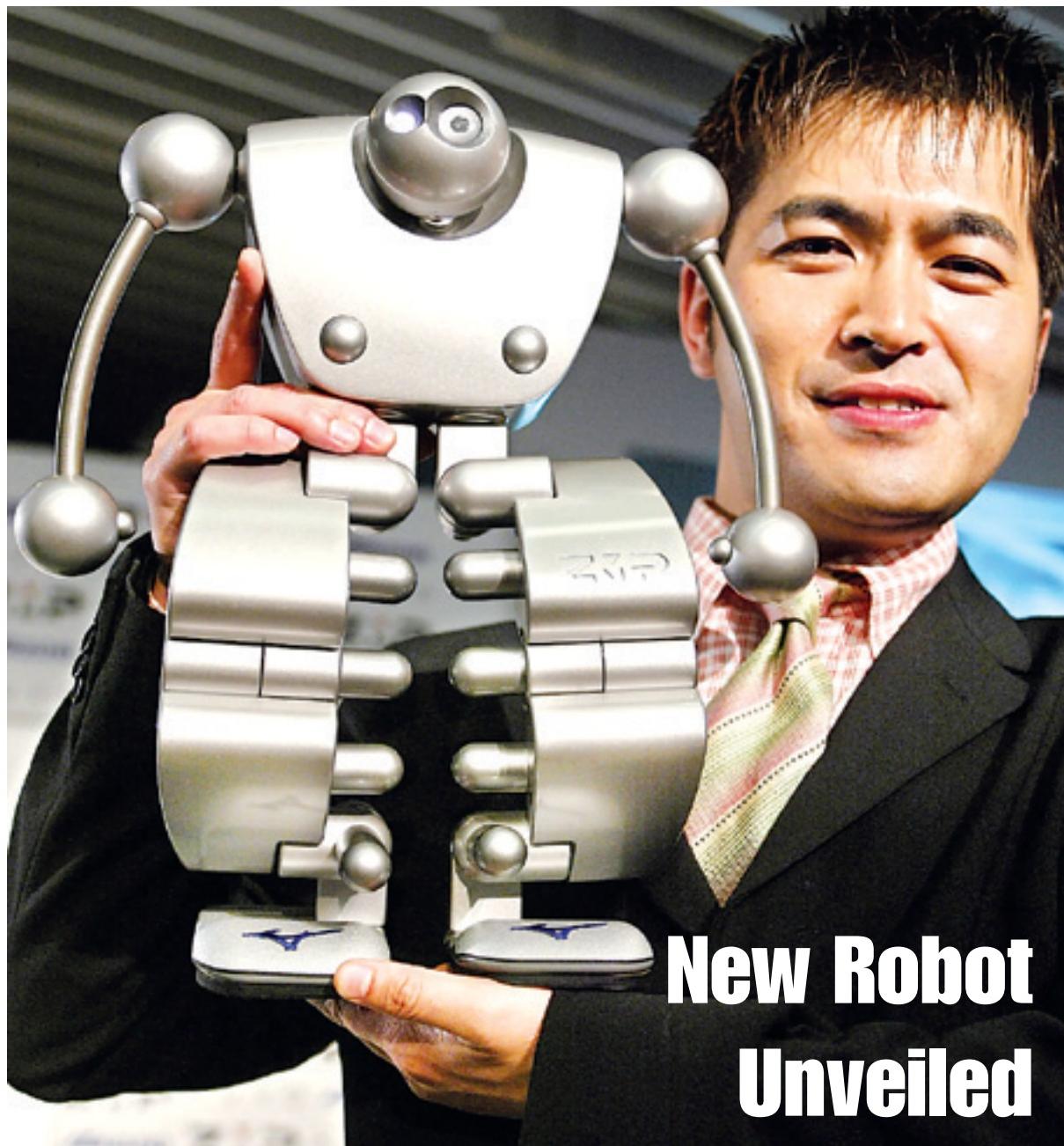
Media Report:

As the number one retailer in the world, Wal-Mart has adopted a strategy of globalization since it first expanded across borders.

In 1993, its overseas stores only accounted for 1% of the total number, while this percentage increased to 25% in 2000 and 27% in 2002. From 1996 to 2000, 27% of its increase in sales was from overseas branches. Even if in the two years of 2001 and 2002 the global market was not so brisk, the contribution of its overseas stores to its sales was still 17%.

Wal-Mart's doing this because its domestic market is already saturated. Secondly, the international market is quite promising. And thirdly, new industries provide development space for cheap discount retailing.

– Cyberway-china.com



New Robot Unveiled

Tokyo, March 3 (AP) - A Japanese company unveiled on Tuesday a prototype of a human-shaped walking robot it said will be mass produced for sale at \$4,600 by the end of the year.

Tokyo-based ZMP, which has so far only made robots for research and rental, expects to sell about 3,000 units of the new Nuvo model, which will be manufactured by another company.

Although other Japanese companies, including electronics and entertainment giant Sony and auto-

maker Honda, have created humanoids, the machines have merely taken part in events and are not on sale for consumers. Sony's Aibo doglike robot has been mass produced and starts at \$780.

The 15-inch-tall Nuvo walks on two legs, picks itself up when it falls, recognizes voice commands such as "advance" and "stop," and is controlled by remote from a cell phone. It has a digital camera in its head that relays images of its surroundings to a videophone from Japan's top mobile carrier NTT DoCoMo. AFP Photo

Rowling Writes into Billionaire Club

New York, February 27 (Reuters)

"Harry Potter" author J.K. Rowling and the founders of web engine Google joined Forbes magazine's list of world billionaires in a year where booming stock markets fattened the bankrolls of the rich.

Rowling, once an unemployed single mother, saw her wealth rise to \$1 billion after the publication of the latest "Harry Potter" novel and the success of the wizardly character as movie franchise, the magazine said on Thursday.

Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates was the world's richest man for the 10th year running with a personal fortune of over \$46 billion, but investor Warren Buffett was catching up.

The world's mega-rich grew even richer over the past year as their stock portfolios swelled, catapulting the total number of billionaires to a record 587.

The total net worth of the world's billionaires added up to a staggering \$1.9 trillion dollars, equal to almost one fifth of the giant US economy.

The top 10 was rounded out by



five members of the Walton family, which owns discount-chain Wal-Mart, each with an equal share in a \$100 billion fortune – more than Gates and Buffett combined.

Rising oil prices helped eight new Russian entrepreneurs squeeze into the select list of the world's extremely rich.

Media Report:

The US is still home to 50% of the world's mega-rich people, making it "the richest" country. Sixteen Hong Kong billionaires are on the list. In 2003, Li Ka-shing, president of Cheung Kong Group,

increased his fortune by US\$4.6 billion dollars.

– Beijing Star Daily, March 1

Analyst's Take:

The number of Russian billionaires has risen from 17 a year ago to 25. The total worth of the 25 billionaires adds up to almost US\$80 billion, equal to one quarter of the country's annual GDP. The super-rich are mostly from the natural oil and gas industries, most of whom made their fortune through privatization of these industries in the 1990s. Meanwhile, quite a few billionaires on the list have been accused by Russian prosecutors as suspects in economic crimes.

Meanwhile, the living standard of the average Russian is still below the level it was at just before the disintegration of the Soviet Union. It is reported that almost one quarter of Russians live below the poverty line, US\$53 per month, a level set by the government.

No other country has seen so many people collect such huge fortunes in such a short period of time.

– Xie Rong, Xinhua Reporter

Oil Slumps After US Crude Stocks Build

New York, March 3 (Reuters) - High-flying oil prices sank more than 2 percent on Wednesday as a build in tight US crude inventories spurred a rash of profit-taking from crude's fierce recent rally to pre-Iraq War highs.

US light crude lost as much as \$1.25 a barrel on initial reaction to the stock build, but settled 86 cents lower at \$36 a barrel. In London, Brent crude closed down 95 cents at \$32.20 a barrel.

Oil has surged more than \$3.50 a barrel, or 12 percent, since the OPEC cartel's February 10 decision to cut supply quotas from April and eliminate production "leaks." Some traders had noted the market was ripe for profit-taking.

Prices slumped after the US government's Energy Information Administration (EIA) reported a two-million-barrel build in crude inventories.



McDonald's to Downsize

Menu

Chicago, March 3 (Reuters) - McDonald's Corp., battered by criticism of its fatty foods, said it would eliminate Supersize french fries and soft drinks by the end of the year, part of a swing towards pleasing health-minded customers and simplifying its menu.

McDonald's Supersize option, which includes a 7-ounce carton of fries and 42-ounce fountain soda, has been targeted by critics as contributing to a growing obesity crisis in the United States where more than half the population is considered overweight or obese.

Hyundai Chooses Slovakia

March 2 (FT) - Hyundai Motor Group will build its planned European car plant in Slovakia, dealing a blow to Poland, which had also competed for the investment.

The decision by South Korea's largest carmaker ends months of aggressive lobbying by the two countries to win one of the biggest foreign investments in central Europe this year.

The plant – to be located in Zilina, northern Slovakia – is the latest step in Hyundai's rapid global expansion, following the opening of factories in the US and China over the past two years.

Coke Taps Into UK Water

London, March 2 (Reuters) - The recipe for Coca-Cola is a jealously guarded secret but the main ingredient for Coke's new British drink couldn't be more transparent – London tap water.

Coca-Cola Company spokeswoman Judith Snyder said Tuesday that Dasani, Coke's attempt to tap into Britain's one billion-pound-a-year bottled water market, took its raw material from the water mains in Sidcup, South-East London.

But she insisted the water then went through a complex purification process using three filters, including a "state-of-the-art" process known as reverse osmosis, before various minerals were added back in to improve taste.

Swiss Cities Preferable to Baghdad

London, February 29 (Reuters) - Baghdad, which suffered war and occupation in 2003, ranked the worst place to live in the world in a survey just published.

Concerns over security and precarious infrastructure were among the reasons putting Baghdad at the bottom of a survey on the quality of life in 215 world cities by Mercer Human Resources Consulting.

Zurich and Geneva in Switzerland were one and two in the poll, which takes into account factors such as the political and social environment, the level of education, the efficiency of transport systems and standards of recreational facilities.



Dead Magpie Sparks Bird Flu Fears



Chaoyang Animal Quarantine Staff disinfected the hospital roof...
Photos by Cui Jun



...and safely transported the dead bird away for dissection.

By Chen Si

The discovery of a dead magpie on the roof of the Sino-Japan Friendship Hospital sent local epidemic containment staff scrambling on Monday, as the bird was feared to have been a victim of avian influenza, or bird flu.

Beijing Youth Daily reported the next day that Zhang Shun, vice director of hospital's department of medical affairs made the call to the Chaoyang Animal Quarantine Office regarding the deceased magpie. The bird was spotted on the roof of building K2 in the hospital's International Medical Treating Department by a patient in an opposite ward.

When they arrived at the hospital, two quarantine office staff members donned protective clothing and proceeded to thoroughly disinfect the dead bird and the surrounding area. The magpie's body was put into a double-layered plastic bag, disinfected again and then shut in an airtight case. They sprayed the case with disinfectant,

sealed it in an airtight bag and took it back for inspection and dissection. That office reported on Thursday that their tests conclusively proved the bird died as a result of ingesting rat poison, not from bird flu.

"It was the fourth time that we have found a dead bird on our premises recently. The first three were also confirmed to not be victims of bird flu," Zhang told *Beijing Today* this Thursday.

Liu Jun, head of the Chaoyang Animal Quarantine Office, told *Beijing Youth Daily* on March 1 that his organization had received such calls about potential avian bird flu victims every day since the outbreak of the deadly disease in Southeast Asia. In one such incident, office staff responded to a call only to find the unmoving chicken in question was actually made of rubber.

The Beijing government is urging all residents of the capital to report any dead birds they see to local quarantine offices for collection, disinfecting and inspection.

A heavily-armed
bomb removal
technician cuts wires
between two of the
suspect containers.
The police later
announced the object
was not a bomb.



Bomb Squad Disarms Suspicious Bag

By Yu Shanshan

The disposal of a suspected bomb froze and fascinated traffic on Yulinxi Road in Fengtai District on Monday morning.

Around 10 am that day, a local shoe repairwoman noticed a green bag lying beneath an iron sewer grate not far from her roadside stand. Curious, she pried up the grate, grabbed the bag and opened it. Inside were three plastic tubes, two white and one red, each about 15 centimeters long and three centimeters wide, all connected by wires.

The woman, surnamed Wang, later told the *Beijing Times*, "It looked just like the kind of bombs they show on TV, so I didn't dare touch anything."

She carefully put the bag down and sent a friend to call the police. Officers arrived around 10:30 am. They placed a green bomb suppression blan-

ket over the bag and stretched police line to enclose an area of 600 square meters around the suspicious item.

People in nearby buildings were asked to close their windows and onlookers were told to keep a safe distance. "This is not an exercise," shouted one police officer.

At 11:53, two bomb removal specialists arrived at the scene. One put on a full body shield and approached the bag, returning to confer with his colleague before taking action.

A few minutes later, four other members of the bomb squad brought out a special bomb removal robot, which was set around 20 meters away from the bag. Using remote control, the police had the robot move to the bag, gently pick it up and set it down again at the center of the road. The robot then ex-



Robotic assistance was brought in for some of the most potentially dangerous work.



Police used a bomb suppression blanket to cover the bag before the bomb squad started work.

tracted the three tubes from the bag and retreated.

A shielded bomb expert approached the bag and cut the wires between the tubes. At 12:15 pm, the robot was used again to detonate one of three tubes with a high-pressure gun. There was a small explosion followed by a puff of white smoke. The two other tubes were then destroyed by one of the bomb removal technicians.

The police conducted a thorough investigation of a nearby residential complex and then sounded the all-clear at 12:50. The police line was removed 30 minutes later and traffic returned to normal.

Beijing Public Security Bureau spokesman Zhang Guanhua told *Beijing Today* on Wednesday that the object in the bag was not a bomb, but refused to disclose any further information on the case.

World Champion Shows Off English Chops

By Wang Xiaoxiao

Last Saturday, *From Bound Feet to Olympic Gold in China: The Case of Women's Table Tennis*, a new book in English by Chinese world table tennis champion Deng Yaping, was released at a ceremony at Tsinghua University. The book is based on an academic paper that Deng wrote while a graduate student at Nottingham University in the UK.

In China, Deng is almost as well known for her academic success as for her ping pong prowess. She holds 18 world championship and four Olympic titles and stood as the top women's table tennis player in the world for seven straight years. Since retiring from the game in 1997, she has gone on to earn a BA in English from Tsinghua University, a Master's in contemporary Chinese history from Nottingham and is currently working on a PhD

at Cambridge University.

The book is a collection of interviews with 16 high-ranking national sports officials, including the manager of the Chinese national table tennis team, as well as coaches and players from national women's sports teams about the secrets behind the great success of Chinese women athletes over the past couple decades.

A report in *Beijing Morning Post* last Sunday quoted Deng as saying, "I kept two questions at the front of my mind when I was writing the paper. First, why are Chinese women athletes so outstanding, surpassing the men in many cases? Second, why has China been able to stay at the top of international table tennis for over 40 years? I wanted to explain why to the West, and also to look at the economic development in China that has come from sport."

Phone Scam Preys on Bus Passengers

By Jiang Yongzhu

A batch of 100,000 tickets for public buses run by Yuntong Keyuan Co. were confiscated by local authorities on February 24 because they carried misleading advertisements.

The ads claimed that people who called the number 9501 0800 and answered a question about the Beijing Olympics could win free long-distance IP call time. No mention was made of fees charged during the calls.

"I dialed that number and then a recording said that I could make a free long-distance IP call if I answered the question correctly. But then it said there was charge of 3 yuan per minute for the information part of the call," a local man surnamed Zheng told

the *Beijing Times* on Sunday. He hung up and then contacted the Haidian District Industry and Commerce Bureau, in what was the first time local authorities were alerted to the scam.

According to an investigation conducted by the Qinglingqiao Industry and Commerce Office under the Haidian bureau, the ads and service were run by local company Zhonghongxun Information Technology. The so-called "information fees" were actually charged throughout the calls and the company earned over 500,000 yuan through the fraudulent service since December 2003.

The company has been slapped with a 100,000-yuan fine by the Qinglingqiao Industry and Commerce Office.

Reborn Beauty a Fraud

By Wang Xiaoxiao

Hao Lulu became a household name last summer when she volunteered to be completely "remade" by a local plastic surgery clinic. Press coverage of her public emergence following several operations at the EverCare cosmetic surgery clinic was equally massive. After a few months out of the spotlight, however, Hao, 25, is again the subject of intensive public scrutiny, not because of her new looks, but as a result of doubts over her background.

In a personal resume distributed to the media before her face and body were altered, Hao claimed to have done so well in primary and junior high school that she finished the normally nine-year course of study in a mere six years. She said she graduated from the China University of Geosciences at the age of 19 and then spent three years in the UK studying jewelry appraisal.

Over the past several months, however, a few people who knew Hao before she went under the knife have contacted *Beijing Youth Daily* to refute her claimed background. The newspaper's reporters have subsequently conducted interviews with former classmates and teachers and with Hao herself to determine the veracity of her claims of scholastic excellence.

According to a report published Tuesday, the *Beijing Youth Daily* reporters found Hao's records from her time at Dongzhimen Middle School indicated she was an average student and did not graduate faster than normal. When the reporters contacted the China University of Geosciences, they were quickly told that the university had no records on Hao Lulu, as staff had been searching



Hao Lulu, shown after her plastic surgery (above) and before (below), gained instant fame when she agreed to undergo the procedures last summer.



their files for information on the young woman since her claims were first published and turned up nothing.

Moreover, Hao's poor English has generated doubts over her alleged study in the UK. EverCare marketing director Bao Huai told *Beijing Youth Daily*, "I never doubted her at first, but later I had to serve as her interpreter when she talked to foreign media. In fact, I've never heard her speak English."

Mr. Sichuan Mom?

By Shan Jinliang

Despite being the only man enrolled at the Chengdu Anwei Housekeeping School, Zeng Hongxin did not look uncomfortable when lessons began last Wednesday.

Once he graduates, Zeng, 37, should become the first male housekeeper from Sichuan Province to be employed at a local home.

Zeng had worked as a rural doctor in his hometown in Wangcang County, Sichuan for 10 years before he signed up for the training course.

"I could only earn 500 to 600 yuan a month in Wangcang. It's a very poor place," Zeng told *Beijing Today* on Tuesday. When he learned that there was great demand for housekeepers from Sichuan in the capital in January, he decided to change careers

and move to Beijing.

Zeng arrived at the Anwei Housekeeping School, run by the Anwei Housekeeping Corporation, on February 17. Eight days later, a person in Beijing contacted the company in order to find a male housekeeper to take care of his elderly father.

"Gold shines the same everywhere," said Zeng, "and if no Beijing families are willing to hire a male housekeeper, only their traditional mindsets are to blame."

Since pouring into Beijing before Spring Festival, many Sichuanese housekeepers have encountered problems and been fired. Zeng said he was confident he would be able to find and keep a position with a high salary because unlike other housekeepers, we would have undergone training before starting work.



Zeng Hongxin could only earn 500 to 600 yuan a month at his previous job as a doctor in rural Sichuan Province.

Photo by Liu Minggang

Quick Answers to Nature's Call

By Jiang Yongzhu

Signs pointing the way to public toilets debuted along heavily-trafficked streets in Dongcheng District on February 24. The 60 signboards, each positioned within 100 meters of a public lavatory, are the first of their kind in Beijing.

Large arrows on the signs point towards the nearest public facilities and directions are provided in both Chinese and English.

"It's hard to find a public toi-

let in this crowded area when you need one badly, and asking the way to the nearest toilet is embarrassing," said a local woman surnamed Li who works in the Wangfujing area.

According to an employee from the Dongcheng Environment and Sanitation Department, the toilet guides were erected in response to complaints from both local residents and visitors. He said that more of the signs are set to appear in the near future.

Doctors in Peril

By Sun Ming

On February 11, a vicious attack took place at West China Hospital in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province.

The hospital's Common Surgical Department, around 70 people, had gathered for a regular meeting. Dr. Li Ning, the director of the department, sat in the middle of the first row.

A middle aged woman wearing a scarf walked up to Dr. Li just after the meeting began. "Are you Dr. Li?" she asked. When he said yes, the woman suddenly pulled out a kitchen knife. She started screaming at him and attacked Dr. Li with the knife.

Doctors intervened and police arrived a few minutes later, but Li had already been seriously injured. He had bad cuts on the head and on his arms which he had put up to protect himself.



Medical staff protest

Chengdu police said on February 11 that the woman, Chen Wenxuan, 55, was a retired teacher from Shaocheng Middle School in the city. Chen committed the crime because she thought that Li had failed to treat her husband, a liver cancer patient, properly.

In June 2002, Chen's husband Shang Bo (pseudonym) was diagnosed with liver cancer at West China Hospital. Dr. Li performed puncture therapy for Shang.

However, Shang didn't get better after the therapy. A few months later, he began to experience serious side effects. Chen thought Dr. Li should have cut away diseased parts of her husband's liver instead of using puncture therapy.

On February 13, West China Hospital organized for a group of medical experts to check Shang's medical record. The experts decided that Li and his assistants' diagnoses and treatment for Shang were correct.

Li is now recovering in hospital.

This is just one of many similar incidents that have occurred in China in recent years. On July 10 2002, Wang Wanlin, a well-known expert in blood diseases and a senior professor at the No.1 Hospital Affiliated with the Hunan Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine, died after being stabbed 46 times by Peng Shikuan, a former patient.

A survey conducted by the Beijing Doctors' Association among 71 hospitals in Beijing found that over the past three years, there have been more than 600 cases of attacks on medical



Li Ning was quickly taken to the emergency room

staff. Ninety people have been seriously injured in these attacks.

It's attracted attention to the subject of doctor-patient conflicts. Why are these disputes so intense? How can doctors' legal rights be protected? Opinions follow:

Liu Zhanpei, surgeon at West China Hospital

My colleagues and I are still in deep sorrow. How can this kind of violent incident take place so often? Just two years ago, Wang Kai, another surgeon in our hospital was stabbed 13 times by He Haijun, one of his patients. Wang became permanently disabled and now can only work for the library in our hospital.

When I heard about Dr. Li, I felt very indignant. We canceled some operations scheduled that day and held a protest in the hospital. We hung up some banners saying 'Doctors can't work

at risk to their lives.'

Dr. Li told us he hoped what happened to him would attract people's attention to this problem.

The lack of standard practice in medical treatment is one of the main reasons for these doctor-patient conflicts. Treatment may vary from doctor to doctor, or from hospital to hospital. If there was a more standard approach, some tragedies could be avoided, I think.

In some western countries, medical treatments are more standardized. There are clear and detailed medical provisions for the kinds of therapies that doctors should adopt with different diseases and different states of the same disease. We don't have this in China. Many conflicts arise from disagreement over treatment. If patients don't get better, they or their family

blame the treatment.

Dr. Li adopted puncture therapy for Chen's husband, which involves injecting medicine to kill the virus in his liver. This is one way of doing it, but cutting out the affected tissue is also an option. A doctor from another hospital once told Chen that he thought this would be better for her husband, so Chen decided Dr. Li had given the wrong treatment and that this was why her husband didn't get better.

However, there is no therapy that can cure liver cancer. Doctors can usually only help people live longer. Puncture therapy can reduce the suffering of patients. If a liver cancer patient survives more than half a year after this kind of therapy, the therapy would be considered a success. Shang is still alive more than a year and a half later, so Li's therapy was successful.

Huang Zhigang, an engineer

When I feel sick, I just buy some medicine as I really don't want to see the cold faces of doctors. There is an unequal doctor-patient relationship that has been common in China for quite a long time. As soon as a patient enters a hospital, they are in a humble position. We often see doctors making a diagnosis and giving treatment in a savior-like manner. It is common to hear doctors say: "I am the doctor. You will take whatever medicine I require you to, and receive whatever treatment I give you."

It seems that everything is in the doctor's hands, and the treatment method has nothing to do with the patient. How can doctors and patients get along with each other under this kind of relationship? If patients are dissatisfied with their doctors, it is easy for them to resort to extreme measures.

Liu Wen, wife of a doctor in Beijing

I heard from my husband that West China Hospital once hired a bodyguard for Dr. Li since he was threatened by a patient last year. The hospital also hired bodyguards for five other doctors, all renowned medical experts. I felt very sad about this. Doctors should be respected, but they have to live with this threat from patients?

Wang Yu, a doctor from the

General Hospital of Chengdu Military Region

There's a severe crisis of trust between doctors and patients in today's China.

The day before surgery, doctors usually tell the family of the patient what will happen and potential dangers of the surgery. Sometimes people secretly record the conversation because they think it might be useful in future. Also, some patients make copies of the medical records because they are afraid we might change the record if some dispute happens in future. This situation does no good for either hospitals or patients.

Doctors are trying to help patients. But we can't deny that there are still a lot of unqualified doctors in the country. In some small cities, many doctors don't even have a bachelors degree. They lack professional training so medical accidents happen frequently. Also, it's true that some doctors have a bad attitude towards patients.

However, it seems the media is happier to cover negative stories about doctors and hospitals, which turns public opinion against doctors.

Wei Huanghua, a member of Beijing Doctors' Association

Why is the doctor-patient relationship better in other countries? I think the main reason is that they have better insurance systems so patients don't necessarily have to pay so much money.

Most of the medical disputes in China are caused by the gap between medical expenses and the curative effects anticipated by the patients. Patients often suspect they have been overcharged.

Huang Ping, a general practitioner in Beijing

China needs more general clinics and general practitioners. Once people get ill, they usually have to go to hospitals. So hospitals in China have a very heavy burden. How can the staff always be in a good mood? How can doctors have enough time to communicate with their patients?

In western countries, people usually have their own family doctors who are general practitioners. When people get ill, they call their doctors first. If their doctors can't treat their illness, they are recommended to visit a particular hospital.

Searching for First Love: Worth the Effort?

By Shan Jinliang

A company in Nanjing has started offering a groundbreaking new service in China. "For as little as 1,000 yuan, we'll help you find your first love," says the advertisement, now appearing in newspapers in cities all around the country. As well as considerable interest, the idea is drawing fierce criticism.

It took a while for the idea to catch on after the first ad was printed in Nanjing, capital of Jiangsu Province in 2001, but now the "First-love-finding" business has spread to Guangzhou, Zhuhai, Chongqing, Chengdu and Urumqi.

Xia Yihai, general manager of Nanjing Pingjiang Information Service Corporation, came up with the idea when he realized he could expand his company's basic lost and found services. "Everyone has a first love," he told Nanjing-based *Jinling Evening News* on January 3.

Xia said 80 percent of the clients for this service were female. The male customers were generally successful businessmen in their forties. Xia said he charged between 1,000 and 2,000 yuan, and the customers should pay 40 percent in advance. The business is now so popular that Xia says he's short of staff.

There have been widely different responses to the business. It's not been too popular in Shijiazhuang but it is booming in other cities. At the same time, the business is receiving both a warm welcome and heavy criticism from the public.

Some of Xia's clients have been able to find their first loves and rebuild sound relationships with them, while some were rejected by them or even beaten by their spouses. Is this a worthwhile service to provide? Opinions follow:

Mr. Lin Ping, a manager in Wuhan, Hubei Province

Xia helped me find my first love in Beijing. My family had

forced me to stop seeing her when I was in senior middle school and it was a terrible blow for me. I often thought of her, even after I got married, and I remained curious about her life.

When we met again in Wuhan this Spring Festival, she was not as good as I imagined; not young or beautiful and the pure feeling I had known was no longer there. Finding her has not affected my life though, and now we are normal friends.

Ms. Xiao Qiu, from Jinan, capital of Shandong Province

I met with my first love for the first time in 20 years. We watched the sea together, counted the masts of the boats and looked at the smoke rising from the chimneys. It felt like I had returned to the past, but we could not begin our relationship again, no matter how much we remembered it.

One night we drove to the city suburbs, and he held my hands tightly, but he soon stepped out of the car and I went home. It is not hard to find someone in such a communication-crowded society, but what can we do after meeting? I have my son and husband, how could I leave and betray them? So don't try and find your first love. It will only bring frustration.

John Doe, 35, married, a US marketing manager in Beijing

I lost contact with my first love for 15 years, and I would like to know how her life is going. But I think it is all the past, and it should stay in the past. If someone came to see me and claimed that I was her first love, I would find it awkward and strange, although I wouldn't think it was offensive for my family.

Dan Warthman, 56, an American writer in Beijing

These kinds of businesses are everywhere in the US. If the company looks for an old girlfriend of mine whom I lost track of, then that really just

means they are searching for old friends. And that's okay.

But it depends on how it's done, how they make contact, and whether it will hurt the family or not. I wouldn't hurt someone or her family; you don't want to do that to someone you once loved.

Shi Kang, 36, a freelance writer in Beijing

I think it is silly to try and find your first love. Let the past stay in the past. I think life would be too troublesome if people are too sentimental.

Miss Li, a college student from Guangzhou Sun Yat-Sen University

I would be very angry if my first love came to see me without warning, having used a company to find me. I could not tell his purpose, and even if he wants to have a reunion, he should contact me privately. I personally do not like commercial intervention in such a private matter.

Ms. Fan Fang, 28, editor of a fashion magazine in Beijing

I would like to know how my first love is getting along these days. I think of him sometimes, but I have a boyfriend now, so

I don't find it necessary to look for my first love. The reunion with him might spoil my beautiful memories, and it might also be awkward for him.

Mr. Gao, Shijiazhuang

I still feel ashamed to remember how proud and narrow minded I was when I was with my first love all that time ago. I thought of looking for her a few years ago but gave it up because I thought I wouldn't succeed. It would be a nice feeling to experience the process of finding your first love.

Shuo Buchu Zaijian (Cannot say goodbye), Cyol.net netizen

The past can never be regained, so why try the impossible to find someone who lives only in history? First love is like a cup of coffee, and we should savor it alone at midnight.

Ryu, Cyol.net netizen

People have beautiful memories of their first love, but it does not mean they actually had a beautiful first love. First love, though painful, is beautiful in memory. Do not take everything too seriously or it can make life too hard. It is enough to think of first love.

SOUND BITES

"The ground would have been suitable for life. That doesn't mean life was there. We don't know that. We believe that that place on Mars for some period of time was a habitable environment."

— Steve Squyres of Cornell University, the lead scientist for NASA's current mission to Mars. Mars now is cold and dry and there is no apparent evidence of life on its surface. Nor have robot craft that have visited the planet found any direct evidence of life.

"Ants are able to find a solution when they are faced with congestion on trails."

— Vincent Fourcasse, a biologist at the Center for Cognitive Animal Research in Toulouse, France. Ants, just like motorists, hate congestion and use alternative routes to avoid it, scientists said Wednesday. The industrious

insects push and shove each other out of the way when it gets too crowded, forcing some to find another route from a food source back to the nest.

"The president's taken the clear position that he supports a constitutional amendment. I support him."

— Dick Cheney, US Vice President said in an interview with MSNBC. Cheney said Tuesday he supports President Bush's call for a federal constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriages, though one of his daughters is gay and he has said in the past the issue should be left to the states.

"No, no, no. That to me would be just a cosmetic or technical response. This in my mind goes much deeper. It's got to be a man-

agement change one way or the other."

— Charles Elson, director of the Weinberg Center for Corporate Governance at the University of Delaware. Analysts had expected Disney would strip the chairmanship from Eisner, but many doubted that step would be enough to placate investors now.

"George Bush has about \$200 million and he's going to start advertising tomorrow. We need to be able to answer him."

— Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry, democratic candidate for president, told an audience in Orlando, Fla. He is a whopping \$100 million behind President Bush in ready cash as he embarks on the next phase of his White House campaign, and dependent on outside groups he can't legally control to help close the gap.

By Chen Si

By Dong Nan / Gong Hao

In China, women are often referred to as "half of the sky". The saying not only means that they constitute half the population of the country but also indicates they should enjoy a social status equal to that of men.

Indeed, the equality of the two genders is enshrined in China's constitution. Traditional ideas that women should do only housekeeping and leave business to the men are supposed to be old fashioned. However, according to surveys and research carried out by the media and by academics, discrimination against women is still deeply rooted in society, and is reflected in much of today's popular culture.

Supporting roles

The film *Tiandi Yingxiong* (*Warriors of Heaven and Earth*) directed by He Ping was one of the hottest movies in China last year. It tells the story of warriors and heroes fighting against bandits and invaders during the Tang Dynasty.

But the heroes are all men, and the only woman in the story is a beautiful and weak princess who needs heroes to protect her. Even the actress who played the princess, Zhao Wei, admitted her character was like "a beautiful vase". In China, movies in which women play essentially ornamental roles are not rare.

It seems the situation is similar in the media. Feng Yuan, a professor at Nanjing University, studied eight major newspapers in China including *People's Daily*, *Guangming Daily*, *China Youth Daily*, *Legal Daily*, *Economic Daily*, *Farmers' Daily*, *Workers' Daily* and *Wenweipo* in 1998. She found that the newspapers were weighted far more towards men than women; most quotes came from men and most pictures were of men.

For example, 91% of quotes came from men. Some 70% of the men featured in the papers had high social status such as officials and business leaders; but only 18.5% of the women featured enjoyed such status.

In the area of TV, things are no better. A survey by female sociologists Liu Bohong and Bu Wei in 2000 found that among 32 provincial TV stations, only seven have specific programs for women. These programs took up eight hours in total every week, roughly 1.8% of the total broadcasting time of the seven stations. And most of the shows were on at unusual hours.

Even textbooks for primary students feature supposedly old fashioned attitudes towards women. In the 1990s, sociologist Zhang De conducted a research project into Chinese language textbooks, most of which are still widely used today, and found they focused far more on men. Most pictures were of men, and



The Silent Half of the Sky

"Chinese women have not experienced a large-scale feminist movement; their equal rights are 'given' by the law to a certain extent"

most women worked as nurses, shop assistants or in lowly agricultural jobs. The scientists, leaders, novelists, artists and soldiers were all men.

Even Deng Yingchao, wife of Premier Zhou Enlai, was help up as a paragon because of her homely qualities, not because of her achievements in public life. Deng was a high-ranking leader in China, and was vice chairwoman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress at the

end of the 1970s. But the text mentioned nothing about her abilities and achievements as a female politician; instead it praised her thriftiness as Premier Zhou's wife, talking about how she would mend old clothes for her husband late at night.

Stereotypes

In 1990, a groundbreaking program named *Kewang* (*Yearning*) was broadcast on TV. Hailed as China's first TV soap opera, it featured a heroine named Liu Huifang, a housewife who embodied all the virtues of traditional women — taking good care of her family and quietly accepting all her many misfortunes and humiliations. Instead of being ridiculed as an outdated stereotype, Liu became celebrated all over the country as an ideal of womanhood. Meanwhile, her sister in law, Wang Yaru, was the model of a selfish intellectual, an arrogant and malicious doctor.

Typical ideas about good wom-

en and bad women continue to prevail in modern culture. The hottest TV soap in China since 1998 has been *Huanzhu Gege* (*Princess Huanzhu*). The heroine, princess Ziwei, is beautiful, warm-hearted, gentle and tolerant. Her enemy and persecutor is an ugly, old, and evil-minded woman.

The prominence of men has also been pointed out in modern Chinese literature, such as Jia Pingwa's *The Deserted City* or Zhang Xianliang's *Half of Man is Woman*. These novels are about how a man controls a group of beautiful women, or how women fight against each other to win the favor of one man. Women in these novels regard men as the only important thing in their lives.

Another research project by sociologist Bu Wei looked into advertising. Bu found that half of the women in TV advertisements were housewives; only 14.5% of them were shown working for a living. Meanwhile, half of the

men were leaders or managers in various trades. Even if men were at home, their major function was entertaining guests, rarely doing house work.

Then there's the usual bombardment of images of beautiful women in the media. According to a survey by sociologist Yu Yang, some 70% of the main magazines for young people always put beautiful women on the covers. And Internet surfers will find columns for women with sections like "fashionable dressing", "skin care", "home decoration" or "cooking". It seems women are still supposed to be interested mainly in the home, fashion, hairdressing, house care and getting married. A good woman should be beautiful and family minded. An independent mind is non-essential.

Feminism in China

"Chinese women have not experienced a large-scale feminist movement; their equal rights are 'given' by the law to a certain extent," said Gong Hao, a sociologist post-graduate of Amoy University in his report on images of Chinese women's status in the mass media.

In 1996, largely inspired by the Beijing Women's Conference the previous year, a non-governmental organization called Media Monitor for Women was organized in Beijing. The group has grown slowly, but it still features dozens of sociologists and media professionals publishing articles on the web page (<http://www.genderwatchchina.org>) everyday, to monitor and criticize media neglect or distorted views of women.

According to the website, "Our plan is to help counterparts in other cities to build media watch groups, and help journalists report on domestic violence related stories from a gender perspective. We also aim to conduct training to improve journalists' gender sensitivity."

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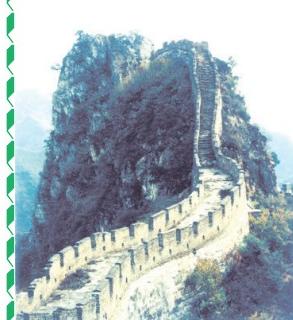
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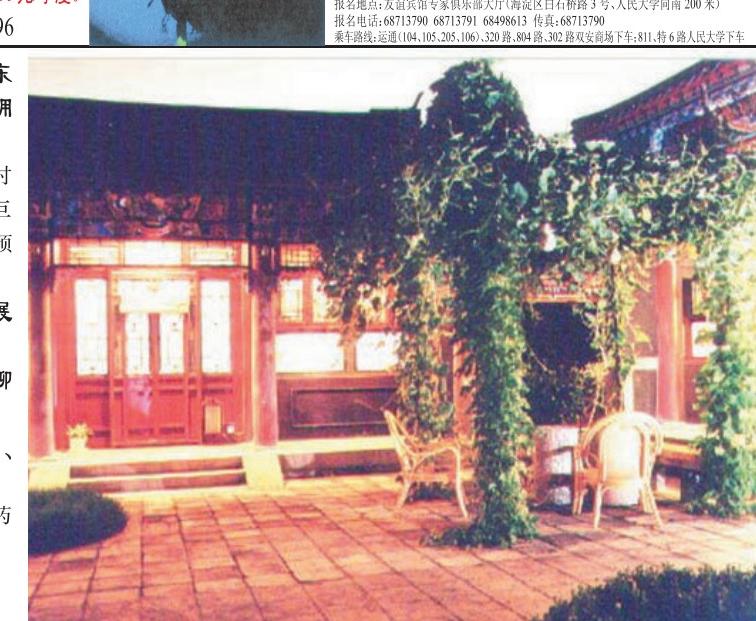
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Chinese Students Murdered in Norway

Cousin arrested after murder of Chinese students in Norway



Yu's grandfather



Wu's parents Huang Cuiping and Wu Heng

Photos by Lin Chaoyang

By Sun Ming

Two Chinese students were found dead at their university dormitory in the capital of Oslo, Norway on February 20.

The male victim was Wu Yuhang, 21, and the female victim was Yu Ningyan, 22. They were a couple, both from Fuqing city in Fujian Province. They had been students at the Sarpsborg Musical Instrument Academy in Oslo.

According to Oslo police, the two victims had been dead for at least a few days before they were found. Wu had been stabbed several times and Yu had been choked with a curtain.

On Monday this week, Oslo police arrested Wu Jiahong, Wu's cousin, who was suspected of involvement in the murder. However, Oslo police haven't confirmed the motive behind the murder or how many people they believe might be involved. The investigation is continuing. Several family members of the two victims left for Norway on Monday.

Suspect reported the case

In the evening of February 20, Oslo police received a report from a Chinese man called Wu Jiahong who claimed that he hadn't heard from his cousin for over a week. Wu Jiahong was also a student at the Sarpsborg Musical Instrument Academy.

Wu told police that he received a message from Wu Yuhang on February 12. Wu Yuhang had asked him to ask for five-



Yu Ningyan and Wu Yuhang



Wu Jiahong (right) with Wu Yuhang and their grandmother

ported the case to the police.

After Wu's report, Oslo policemen came to the Sarpsborg Musical Instrument Academy on the evening of February 20 and kicked down the door of Wu Yuhang's dormitory.

The police found two bodies, along with a terrible smell, in the small room. Shocked by the scene, Wu Jiahong fainted and was taken to a nearby hospital.

Staff of the Chinese Embassy in Norway soon arrived at the Academy.

"Both of the victims were freshmen and they arrived in Norway in September last year. When the killing happened, most students of the college were on winter vacation," said *Xiandai Kuaibao*, a Nanjing-based newspaper on February 23.

The Sarpsborg Musical Instrument Academy has 160 students, including 15 from China, and is the only one of its kind in Norway. According to the Chinese Embassy in Oslo, at present there are nearly 1,000 Chinese students in Norway.

A member of the Chinese Embassy in Oslo told *Xiandai Kuaibao* on February 22 that the murder had shocked Norway, because the crime rate has always been low in the country.

Did they know the killer?

On February 22, two days after the discovery of the murder, reporters from *Dongnan Kuaibao*, a Fuzhou-based newspaper, visited the families of the two victims in Fuqing. Most of their family members or friends thought that they were killed by someone they knew.

"They were very kind. I can't believe they had any enemies," the newspaper quoted Wu Heng, Wu's father, as saying on February 24.

News Morning Post, a Shanghai-based newspaper, said on February 24 that the two victims hadn't been killed on the same day.

"Though the college asked the students not to comment on the case, some students told *News Morning Post* that Yu might have been killed one week before her body was found, as her body was almost unrecognizable, while Wu might have died three or four days before the discovery of his death," said the newspaper.

The Oslo police initially suspected that Wu might have killed Yu and then killed himself. However, upon further investigation, the police thought they must have been killed by a third party, mainly because the door of the room had been locked from outside.

"The police say there may have been more than one killer," *Dongnan Kuaibao* quoted local media in Norway as saying on February 26.

On February 26, reporters from Norway National Broadcasting and Television Station came to the victims' hometown in Fuqing to interview their parents. With their help, *Dongnan Kuaibao* interviewed an Oslo policeman on the phone on February 27.

The policeman said that Wu and Yu had asked for six-months leave from their college in January this year, saying they planned to get married. But actually, they didn't get married, and they had been working for Chinese restaurants in Oslo since January.

How did they get to Norway?

Another possibility is that the two victims were connected with human smugglers. The police are investigating whether the students were killed by human smugglers to whom they owed money.

Yu's parents said it was Changhong Service Center for Scholarly Exchange in Fuzhou that helped their daughter to study abroad in Norway. However, a reporter from *Dongnan Kuaibao* couldn't find Yu's record at the center on February 24.

The service center said it might have been a fake service center that helped Yu to go to Norway. Yu's parents admitted that they had to find 100,000 yuan for their daughter to go.

"Her mother and I both objected to her going to study abroad, especially to such a remote place. But she insisted," the father Yu Jianquan told *Dongnan Kuaibao* on February 24.

Yu Jianquan said the last call he received from his daughter was on February 12. In the evening of February 22 he received a call from the Chinese Embassy in Norway to say that his daughter had been murdered.

On September 28 last year, a reporter from *News Morning Post* met the two victims at the Sarpsborg Musical Instrument Academy. He planned to report on the life of Chinese students in Norway.

"Several Chinese students including Wu and Yu said hello to a reporter from *News Morning Post*. They said they were very satisfied with their life and study in Norway, but most people didn't want to talk about how they came to the country, especially Yu. When asked why she chose the musical instrument college, she answered reluctantly that she was interested in music," said the newspaper on February 23.

The Sarpsborg Musical Instrument Academy said that they recruited Chinese Students through a Danish service center, which is owned by a Chinese person. However, the university found that some of the Chinese students they recruited lacked even basic knowledge of English and music, so the college stopped the contract with the service center several months ago," said *Dongnan Kuaibao* on February 29.

Two kind people

Nearly all the people who knew Wu said he was a smart, diligent and warm-hearted young man. Before he went to Norway, he had been a staff member of the Advertisement Department of Fuqing Television Station. Wu is the only child of the family. After hearing of his death, his mother Huang Cuiping wasn't able to eat for three days.

Before Yu went to Norway, she was a teacher at a primary school in Fuqing County. In her parents' eyes, Yu was clever and lively. Her parents still can't come to terms with their daughter's death.

Even though both victims came from Fuqing, Fujian Province, they didn't know each other until they met on a bus in Oslo early this year. According to their friends in Oslo, the two young people did love each other deeply and their plans to get married were genuine.

A Nice Bit of Cloth

Reporters from Beijing Youth Daily uncover a macabre but profitable business



Quilts being taken to the market



A dealer



Loading up the quilts

Photos by Wu Sanmeng

A man in his forties came out of the white building. His face was tanned and he looked weary after his journey. This was Zhang Ruitang.

After hearing we had come to buy his quilts, he welcomed us warmly and asked us to come and talk in his home. His home was also well equipped with color TV, Hi-fi and a fridge.

He said he had left home to pick up the quilts at four in the morning and the journey was about 150 kilometers. He boasted that there were eighteen people waiting for this load of quilts who were from Heze, Liangshan and Danxian. We asked him, "How can you guarantee the supply?" He said that he had "contracts" with funeral homes in six counties. There are two funeral homes in each county, so all together he is in charge of selling quilts from 12 funeral homes. He is always on call and easy to work with, so all the funeral homes like to cooperate with him.

10 yuan profit for one quilt

Since we asked to buy a number of quilts, Zhang began to calculate the price. Finally he decided to sell them for 3 yuan per kilo. According to staff at the funeral home, Zhang buys the quilts for 5 yuan each, and one quilt weighs at least 5 kilograms. In this way, Zhang sells a quilt for 15 yuan with 10 yuan as his profit. He had 60 quilts that day, so he could make 600 yuan profit. Zhang told us the price had been lower before the Spring Festival as many more people died than usual.

Zhang has been dealing with this kind of quilt for 15 years. We asked, "What are these quilts used for?" He said, "Some are bought by quilt factories to be recycled and some are used for mattresses and sofas. Anyway, the quilts are still in good shape. They can even be resold as new quilts by the factories. It is a very lucrative business. A new quilt costs at least 50 yuan. It is a pity that I can't do this myself as I am too busy," he said.

Zhang said these "new" quilts are sometimes sold to small hostels and wholesale markets.

We asked if he would like to use this kind of quilt. He smiled. "You think these quilts are dirty but after getting the money, you won't feel that way."



Jin Wei searches his photos on the computer screen.

A Dream to See the World

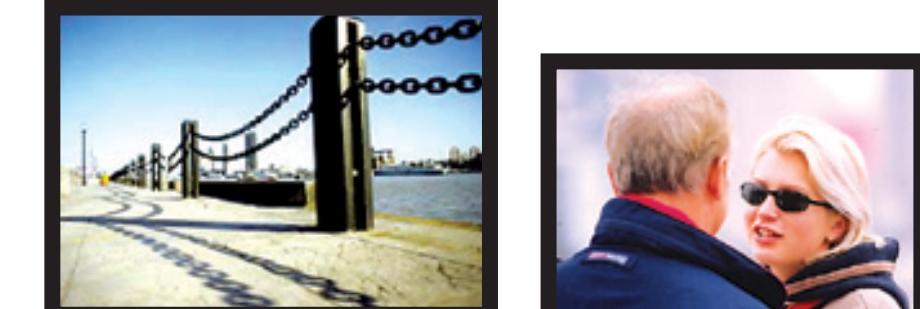
By Jin Wei

I always listened to people describing how beautiful the flowers were in spring, how magnificent the trees were in summer, how vivid the maple leaves were in autumn and how yellow the plum blossoms were in winter when I was still a little kid. I wished so much to see the birds sing in the trees in the morning and the fish swimming in the rivers. But I was born with poor eyesight and had to use a magnifying glass just to read or write. I used to observe things in the distance with a telescope and I thought to myself how great it would be if I could take a photo of them and have a careful look with my magnifying lens. When I first came up with this idea, I knew it might seem like a bit of a joke. But the desire had grown stronger and stronger in my mind and I finally bought a camera and began to learn photography. I tasted the happiness of seeing and the fantasy of photography, especially in the first year. Later I bought better cameras with various lenses, and the quality of the pictures improved a lot.

The things I shoot are mostly stationary objects, such as trees, flowers and houses, but I also take pictures of my family and friends.

I lift up my camera amid the curiosity and laughter of the crowd. Taking one picture can sometimes take me more than ten minutes. I have to wait not only for the right moment, but also for my eyes to stop quivering. But if I wait, I can get some very good pictures. I feel very satisfied when I see my pictures through my magnifying glass. I would never have fulfilled my dream of seeing had it not been for photography.

(Translated by Wang Xiaoxiao)



Jin Wei's works.

By Li Jian / Wang Xiaoxiao

Jin Wei was born with several congenital eye diseases leaving him nearly blind. To his eyes, a building 10 meters away is just a quivering, vague blur. Yet Jin is an enthusiastic photographer and his shots have won awards. His pictures have even been published in some of China's top photography magazines such as Popular Photography. It takes a combination of magnifying glasses and special computer technology for Jin to be able to see the photos he takes, but it's helped him at last to see the color and beauty of the world. "No-one thinks a blind man can take pictures," says Jin. "I want to change their minds."

Something people take for granted

Jin can't help it that his eyes are constantly quivering, like a person looking out of a train window. He says what he sees is like a TV screen receiving interrupted signals. But he's had a strong desire to see for as long as he can remember. He still remembers the first time he saw color TV. He cried for a whole night after seeing the blurred colors on the screen, but he realized he could see just enough to keep in touch with the world. Soon, photography would allow him to see more clearly than he'd dreamed possible. "It's an ordinary part of life for other people, but for me, seeing is a luxury," he says.

After graduating from Changchun University in 1992, Jin found that his poor eyesight made it hard for him to find a job. But he was able to make some money working as a tutor during the day and selling lamb kebabs in the evening. He put some of the money he earned towards his first camera. He found that with a magnifying glass he could see the photos reasonably clearly and his hobby became a passion.

Soon, his simple camera was no longer adequate. Jin spent 2,000 yuan - six months' wages - on a Nikon camera, and later he graduated to a Canon SLR and a collection of lenses.

Where Jin's sight let him down, his sense of touch made up. His early pictures were mainly confined to stationary objects that he

could touch and decide from which angle to photograph them. Soon he started discovering other ways of judging photographs. "If I want to take photos of the sunrise, I feel the heat of the sun to judge the moment," he explains. His hearing is also an important assistant. By listening carefully, he can tell the position of a subject. He can also take a shot of a person when he hears them laugh.

The Canon EOS 50E and the specially designed computer Jin uses have helped him make great strides. He also uses a tripod to obtain sharp pictures. But it still takes a huge amount of patience. If he waits, sometimes for more than 20 minutes, he finds the movement of his eyes usually slows down for a period so he can see something more clearly.

I just want to take good pictures

When Jin fumbles in the streets and puts his face close to the camera to operate it, he sometimes attracts unfriendly laughter. "They look at me as if I were a monkey wearing a costume," he says.

However, Jin has never considered giving up his hobby, even though he leads a difficult life with his family, a disabled wife and an eight-year-old son. He needs sponsorship to buy more equipment, but what he has at the moment has all been paid for from his own wages. His resolution and desire for knowledge helped him get a good degree from Changchun University. Though he found it hard to get a decent job, he eventually found employment as a music and art teacher in the Nursing School of Shanghai Second Medical University. His courses became students' favorites at the school and he even helped establish a Chinese traditional music band.

Jin reads as many books on photography as he can, again with the help of magnification. "I cannot remember how many nights I have spent reading," he says.

Jin's favorite subject is fire, which appears as throbbing life in his eyes. He even went on a pilgrimage to the temples in Putuo Mountain to shoot the flames of the burning incense and candles.

"Viewing fire through my camera, I feel I can fathom the spirit of the world. And I sense the power of life and feel the edge of it," he says.

My heart is free

Jin is not content merely with photography. He's spent eight years learning video editing techniques so he can transfer images and scenes to VCDs. Now he's working on some 3-D animations.

Jin longs to hold a solo photography exhibition focusing on the handicapped. "There are countless pictures taken of the handicapped by ordinary people. But they will never understand the real life of the handicapped. As a handicapped person, I have so much in common with them," he says.

Through a Looking Glass



By Li Yiping

The renovation of six World Cultural Heritage sites in Beijing will move into high gear this year. In 2003, the Beijing Municipal Cultural Relics Bureau formulated the Cultural Relics Protection Plan for the 2008 Olympics. The sites included in the plan are: the Peking Man ruins at Zhoukoudian, the Great Wall, the Summer Palace, the Temple of Heaven, the Forbidden City and the Ming Tombs.

Summer Palace

The Summer Palace, in northwest suburban Beijing, was first built in the 12th century as an imperial garden. The emphasis of this year's renovation project is on the refurbishment of Foxiangge (Pavilion of Buddhist Fragrance) and Paiyundai (Cloud Dispersing Hall), two scenic spots situated on the 58-meter-high Longevity Hill.

Several renovations in the course of their history have partially changed the original appearances of the eight-sided, three-story Pavilion of Buddhist Fragrance and Cloud Dispersing Hall, where Empress Dowager Cixi (1835-1908) celebrated her birthdays. The current project will restore both buildings to their original appearance as described in historical documents.

Specific measures include substituting traditional gray bricks for the cement bricks currently paving the floor; and inspecting and repairing all sloped, double-eaved roofs and carved brackets supporting the overhanging eaves from the columns.

Some of the paintings that adorn the Long Corridor, which links the scenic spots on the south side of Longevity Hill, will be replaced. Changes will be limited to those sections that are not historically accurate.

Forbidden City

The massive renovation of the Forbidden City – the most extensive since the Qing Dynasty was toppled in 1911 – will continue until 2020.

Besides the ongoing overhaul of the Wuyingdian (Hall of Martial Prowess), which started on October 17, 2002, Wumen (Meridian Gate) and Yanxi Hall will be added to this year's work schedule.

The Meridian Gate, the main entrance to the Forbidden City, was first built in 1420 and remodeled in 1647. Five structures above the gate, commonly known as the Five Phoenix Towers, as well as adjoining corridors are to be repaired.

In 1908, Empress Dowager Longyu provided funds to build the glass-walled Lingzhao Pavilion in Yanxi Palace. Construction was brought to an abrupt halt by the outbreak of the revolution of 1911, which eventually overthrew the Qing Dynasty. Work to be done on the building includes reinforcing bearing columns, replacing rusted



Deling, the tomb of Ming Emperor Zhu Youxiao is currently under renovation.

Photo by Photocome

Beijing to Refurbish World Heritage Sites

parts and repairing stone steps to the pool garden in the hall.

Zhoukoudian

The first 500,000-year-old Peking Man skull was unearthed in 1929 at Longgu (Dragon Bone) Hill, northwest of Zhoukoudian, in the southwest of Beijing. The discovery made Zhoukoudian world famous.

China put the site under state protection for key cultural relics in 1961, and in 1987 it was included on UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage list.

In the recent years, however, rock quarrying, in addition to natural erosion, has accelerated damage to the already worsening natural environment around the prehistoric site.

On August 12, 2003, the Beijing Municipal Cultural Relics Bureau held a seminar on protection of Zhoukoudian. The Institute of Geology and Geophysics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences was assigned to conduct a thorough field investigation. Scientists determined that a total of seven fossil sites at Zhoukoudian were in dangerous condition.

As a result, a program for the preservation of Peking Man relics is now being developed and is expected to be completed this month. The program will get under

way immediately after receiving financial government approval.

Temple of Heaven

The Temple of Heaven, located in the southeast of Beijing, is China's largest existing complex of ancient ceremonial buildings. After its completion in 1420, some 22 emperors conducted splendid sacrificial rituals here. Today, Qiniandian (Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests) has become a symbol of Beijing recognized all over the world.

However, several renovations over the centuries have changed the exterior of the hall, and it now clashes with the ancient buildings that surround it.

This year's refurbishment will focus on restoring the original appearance of the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests. Tasks will also include clearing weeds from the roof; repairing the broken eaves; replacing the pavement with gray brick; and protecting all the stone sections, including the dragon-head carvings, from weathering.

Great Wall

Maintenance and repair of the Great Wall, which stretches some 6,700 kilometers across China, is an overwhelming task. The Beijing Municipal Cultural Relics Bureau has adopted a sector-by-

sector solution to this problem, and chosen the Simatai section of the Great Wall as this year's priority renovation project.

The Simatai Great Wall lies on steep mountain slopes in Miyun County, on the northern border of the greater Beijing area. Simatai has more beacon towers than other sections of the Great Wall, with the two closest standing just under 44 meters apart, and the two farthest, 600 meters.

Using traditional materials and technologies, workers will repair and consolidate gates, battlements and wall sections that have partially collapsed. In addition, lightning conductors will be attached to iron and steel support struts and railings that have recently been added to the wall.

Ming Tombs

Thirteen Ming Dynasty emperors were buried in the tombs built from the 15th to 17th centuries in a broad valley at the foot of Tianshou (Heavenly Longevity) Mountain in Changping District, about 50 kilometers north of Beijing.

The Beijing municipal government declared the Ming Tombs a protected site in 1957, and four years later it was placed under state protection for key

cultural relics. At the 27th session of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee in July 2003, the site was officially included on the World Cultural Heritage list.

Beijing has already begun its program to renovate the Ming Tombs. Work on the Deling and Kangling tombs began in 2002. Consolidation of the walls surrounding the Kangling Tomb and clearing of its drainage ditches should be completed this year.

Repairs on the Qingling and Tailing tombs will begin this year. The Qingling Tomb was built for Zhu Changluo, the 14th emperor of the Ming Dynasty, and his three wives. The surrounding walls, minglou (the tallest building above ground at an emperor's mausoleum), single-arched stone bridge and drainage systems are included in the list of items to be repaired.

Tailing Tomb was built for Zhu Youtang, the ninth Ming emperor. The walls around the tomb will be consolidated and the drainage ditches cleared.

When the renovations are complete, visitors and athletes who come to Beijing for the 2008 Olympic Games will be able to see the best of the city's long history and profound cultural legacy.

New Books Illustrate Old Lifestyle

By Zhao Pu

Those with an interest in the culture and life of old Beijing have a new set of references. Liu Yida, well known for his pieces in the "Traditional Beijing Lifestyle" page of *Beijing Evening News*, has published two new books recently, containing collections of stories and in-depth interviews from his newspaper column.

Laogener Renjia, or *Deeply Rooted Families* weaves together stories of 22 families who had been living in the capital for hundreds of years. Most of these families have a famous ancestor, such as a celebrated writer, a beloved Beijing Opera singer, or a high official who bore a royal title.

Liu's interviews with the descendants of these celebrities reveal many little-known stories of behind-the-scenes life in these once prosperous homes. The stories tell about the celebrities' fame, marriages, hobbies, lifestyle, and the changing fortunes of their descendants.

"What I want to present to readers is not merely private matters and trivial happenings in (the subjects) family life. The ups and downs in the development of each family actually epitomizes the background historical and cultural changes of the city. That's what more important to me," writes Liu in the prologue of the book.

Laopu Dizi, or *Legacy of Old Shops* focuses on some of the most famous shops and commercial institutions of old Beijing, like the old Dong'an Market, Dashilan, Quanjude Roast Duck and Fangshan Restaurant in Beihai Park. Liu identifies the outstanding business management and skills that were instrumental in the success of these businesses, and discusses whether or not they were inherited by the founders' successors.

Laogener Renjia (28 yuan) and *Laopu Dizi* (27 yuan) are published by Beijing Publishing House and can be found in big bookstores around the city.



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Modern Twists on Traditional Toys

Sculptor Liang Shuo exhibits new creations at 798

By Yu Shanshan

After earning a name for his series of life-size sculptures of migrant workers, artist Liang Shuo has turned his creative powers to a smaller medium – toys. As a toymaker, Liang is quite specialized, creating only *yaojiao*, a kind of traditional Chinese plaything also known as a spinning rattle, updated with themes, colors and images that would make traditional artists blush.

"Toy R Art / Temple Fair Liang Shuo's Handmade Art Toys at Bargain Price," a show of these progressive playthings, opened at the 25000 Cultural Transmission Center in the 798 Art District on February 20 and runs through the 21st of this month. The heading betrays one of Liang's artistic motives in taking on toys, namely making whimsical and humorous works priced to appeal to many people, particularly those outside normal art circles.

Around 90 of the toys are displayed in over a dozen wood posts scattered around the space. From February 20 to 29, the collection literally changed daily, as Liang moved his whole *yaojiao* workshop into the gallery and was on hand every afternoon, sitting among boxes of parts and half-made works as he assembled new toys. Every piece on show is also for sale and tagged from 100 yuan to 300 yuan each.

Liang was inspired to make the drastic shift in medium two years ago while visiting a temple fair in the countryside in Henan Province. There he saw his first *yaojiao*, a traditional rural toy made of a clay figurine stuck atop a narrow stick. A spring-bound match is attached to the stick, so when the toy is spun, a flat section strikes the match, giving off a sharp crack, and keeps going around. He bought one portraying Sun Wukong, the Monkey King of Chinese legend, which ended up being the model for all his own creations.

"I took the model apart and figured out how to make *yaojiao* myself. Now you can see that my versions are sturdier, louder, and better looking," Liang told *Beijing Today* last Saturday, pointing to the Monkey King inspiration that he visibly placed at the entrance to the workshop.

The show itself has an intentionally informal air. The artist explained, "I love the form of the temple fair, with



A piece from the Chinese character series



Fun toy or postmodern statement?



Not all toys are suitable for children.



The toys are displayed in wooden posts scattered around the 25000 Cultural Transmission Center.

people strolling around in happy moods. That's the kind of vibe I wanted for showing and selling my artworks. Yet I also want to show that these pieces are more than simple toys, they are works of art."

Most of Liang's *yaojiao* fall into four large categories, Chinese characters, the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac, multi-headed beasts and the tradition-busting "turd" series. These dirty works are topped with sculptures of chunks of feces or figures squatting over toilets. Rounding out the collection are little sculptures with such modern subjects as orating officials, women giving birth or otherwise perched nude in revealing positions, apartment buildings and 10 works portraying a man lying on a plate that Liang has humorously dubbed "*hongshao renrou*" or "braised human."

Nearly 20 of the works were purchased in the first week of the show, with the "turd" series the most popular. Liang speculated on the reasons for the popularity of the crapular sculptures, "I think that it's because toilet matters are so private that few people are comfortable talking about them in public. But, people may still enjoy looking at things like this at home – the works can serve as an interesting outlet for their buried feelings."

Such departures from traditional themes are intentional statements by Liang of his status as a contemporary artist. He said, "Folk artists – I saw many during my journey to Henan and Shaanxi – are not so creative, they just continue the traditions taught to them by their fathers and grandfathers."



The artist plays with his work "red braised human."

Photos by Wang Wei

Rarely do they stop to add their individual thoughts into their works. That, on the contrary, is precisely my job."

One way Liang expresses ideas in the works is by pasting snippets from modern publications to each piece.

He grabbed a food magazine from his table. "The cover's claim of being 'the first food fashion magazine in China' is not so appealing on its own, but putting this kind of thing on a sculpture can result in interesting tension between the two," Liang said. "Some of the combinations may be absurd, but I believe all the combinations in my toys have meaning. At the same time, I can't explain why I chose to put any two together – it's just instinct, something from my subconscious."

A few works, particularly those in the Chinese character series, seem to have been more

mindfully created. One toy is topped by a hollow clay box with a pictogram cut into one side that reveals a tiny sculpture of a nude torso at the core. "All the characters I choose are positive or auspicious words, like those that parents like to give to their kids as names. I just got a feeling that I should juxtapose these popularly used words against more explicit, rarely talked about parts of life," he said.

While Liang's previous sculptures proved very popular with foreign art collectors, his *yaojiao* seem to have struck less of a nerve with *laowai*. Only three foreigners have made purchases, all pieces from the "turd" series. "It requires a lot of understanding of Chinese culture to get the humor in most of my works, like in the Chinese characters and 12 animals series," he explained, "but this is a positive change for me. Before, all of the people who

bought my sculptures were foreigners. This time I'm glad my own people can enjoy and collect these toys."

That kind of populist sentiment seems high on Liang's artistic agenda these days. "I don't hope the value of these new works will appreciate. I am more interested in making my works accessible to more and more people, and making things that though inexpensive, will be cherished by such collectors," he said. At the same time, to stress the toys' artistic status, Liang provided every buyer a signed certificate of authenticity.

"I'm going to continue making *yaojiao* after this show closes, but I hope to make them better, more delicate and detailed. If I can find a facility to produce the mechanical parts, it would allow me to focus completely on the sculpture and help me cut costs," he concluded.

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An Authentic Chinese Princess



By Dong Nan

Turandot, the Chinese princess of Puccini's opera, is even better known in China since Zhang Yimou staged his production of the classic here and in Italy. This month, a Peking opera version of the story will introduce a warmer, more human version of the cold-hearted princess.

"Turandot tells a story of universal humanity, that is why it is widely accepted by audiences all over the world," Wu Jiang, director of China Peking Opera House told *Beijing Youth Daily*.

According to Wu, the Peking Opera version is based on Chinese aesthetics — Turandot, the mysterious princess full of hatred toward men in Puccini's opera is a creation of the composer's

imagination, and not representative of Asian women.

In the new version, Turandot is an unsophisticated princess who longs for love; she kills those suitors since they seek to use her to win fame and gain as the emperor's son-in-law.

Some of the music from Puccini's original opera, including *Nessun Dorma*, will also feature in the Peking opera, said Wu, to make it more accessible to foreign audiences.

After the Beijing performances, the opera will be presented in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Israel and Poland.

The Peking opera *Turandot* will be staged by the China Peking Opera House at Poly Theater for a 12-night season from March 10.

Left — Deng Min as Turandot

Go Go Girls



By Wang Xiaoxiao

The much-hyped all girl group Meimei, the mainland's first girl group to be signed by Warner Music China, released their debut album *Nothing to Fear* on Wednesday.

Meimei consists of four young women: Xiaoxi from Chengdu, Mengyao from Wenzhou, Ningjing from Chongqing and Zhangjie from Kunming, who have all been subject to an intensive training regimen since they signed with Warner last year.

The record company has invested heavily in Meimei. *Nothing to Fear* was produced in the studios of Huoxing Diantai (Spark Broadcasting), which also produced Zhou Xun's highly-praised *Summer*.

Vocals: Wang Yue Guitar: Yang Fan Bass: Yilina Drums: Shen Jing Huang Xiaoqiao (*Yellow Banana*) 2001

Di Di Di 2003

Recommendations: Huang Xiaoqiao (*Yellow Banana*), *Dipi* (*Your Belly*), *Hongse Liuxing* (*Red Comet*), *Now I Wanna Say Apology to You*, *What Is Now*



Rock Review

Hang on the Box

By Dong Nan

Guazai Hezishang (Hang on the Box) are China's first and best known all-girl punk band. The band formed in July, 1998, when all the members were still in high school.

Their low-fi, three-chord punk sound is clearly influenced by US band The Breeders, and lead singer Wang Yu's vocals are tough, intense, occasionally sloppy and undeniably charming.

In 2000, Japanese record company Benten signed a recording contract with the young band and in April

2001, they released their debut album *Yellow Banana* in Japan, which achieved moderate success there. Their second album, *Di Di Di*, was also recorded in Japan, in 2003. The lyrics are all in English, simple and direct, if occasionally lacking in fluency, "to win foreign fans," explains Wang Yue in an introduction to the band.



David Copperfield



Returns

By Wang Xiaoxiao

David Copperfield is returning to China, following his underwhelmingly successful tour last year. This time he will give a total of 38 performances in Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Nanjing and Changsha this April and May.

According to tour sponsor, Poly Culture and Art Company, audiences will be treated to a 100 percent brand-new show.

There are eight performances scheduled for Beijing's Capital Gymnasium from April 20 to 25. Those audience members who were lucky enough to be made to disappear during Copperfield's performance last year are being offered a 20 percent discount for a ticket to the up-coming show.

WORLDWIDE



Jesus, played by Jim Caviezel, sits with the apostles in the film

'Passion' Grows to \$125 Million at Box Office

Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* keeps on defying conventions.

The film's boffo preliminary weekend estimates were revised upwards Monday when final numbers came in. The Friday-to-Sunday haul came in at a stunning \$83.8 million, bringing total sales to a massive \$125.2 million since its Wednesday opening.

"Passion" rendered that model irrelevant. When the final grosses were in, Friday's was \$22.9 million, Saturday's was \$33.1 million, and Sunday's was \$27.9 million — 22% higher than Friday and down just 16% from Saturday. (Reuters)



Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta-Jones

Zeta-Jones Loses Wales Planning Dispute

Catherine Zeta-Jones and her parents are building a home on an estate in a fishing village in southern Wales, and they want privacy there.

But they appear to be losing an effort to force one of their neighbors to stop managing his telecommunications business from the garage of his home.

On Tuesday, the Swansea Council planning committee voted to allow Steve Gwynn to keep doing that for the next two years, despite the \$1.85 million Zeta-Jones home being built. (AP)

Michael Jackson's Phone Records Seized

Investigators in the Michael Jackson child molestation case have seized about 100 pages of phone records, videos of the pop star, and a DVD of a party at his Neverland Ranch, according to court documents.

The documents released Monday included search warrants from January, law enforcement affidavits requesting them and lists of seized items.

Santa Barbara County Superior Court Judge Rodney Mel-



Michael Jackson

ville agreed last month to release the records, but ordered details to be omitted; the resulting documents do not include such information as where the warrants were served and descriptions of the items taken. (Reuters)

Oud Master Revitalizes Arab Music, Pioneers Fusion

Palestinian-American oud virtuoso Simon Shaheen regularly sells out concerts around the world. His CD *Blue Flame* garnered 11 Grammy nominations after it was released in 2001, and he even got a mention in popular writer Diana Abu-Jaber's new novel *Cresent*.

Musician, composer and educator Shaheen has worked relentlessly since coming to the United States in 1980 to share the richness and complexity of traditional Arabic music with Western audiences, as well as pioneering a new direction in fusion that blends Arabic music with jazz and Latin beats.

(Reuters)

Jerry Springer Opera Scoops British Theater Awards

A foul-mouthed opera about Jerry Springer's lurid talk show has won four of Britain's top theater awards including Best New Musical at the Laurence Olivier Awards on Sunday.

Jerry Springer — The Opera by British composer Richard Thomas, a profanity-laden show which the real-life Springer has given his full support, has been seen by more 230,000 people and has taken \$9 million since it opened at the National Theater's Lyttelton stage last year.

The critically-acclaimed show, which has already picked up a clutch of awards, transferred to the Cambridge Theater in London's West End last November.

(Reuters)



Jerry Springer

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Spas Hit the Spot

International Women's Day, March 8, is a holiday meant to recognize women's incalculable contributions to society. It is a well-earned day off for all women, making it the perfect occasion to calm the nerves, treat the body and soothe the soul at a local spa.

Spas became popular in Europe in

the 17th and 18th centuries, but are a far newer concept in the capital. These days, though, local business is booming and people seeking full-body scrub downs, special baths, professional massages and other pamperings have a wide range of choices.

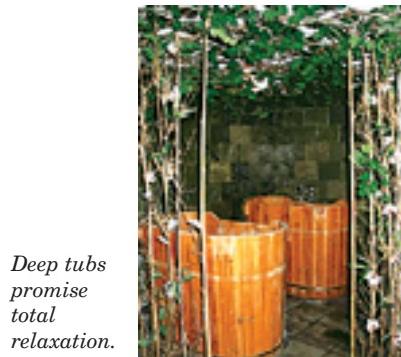


Start Spring with Healthy Skin

By Jiang Yongzhu

In the capital, the coming of spring is not only restorative to the mind, it is great for the skin, as it means the end of another brutally dry winter. Yet women who really care for their skin should not leave its health to the fate of the seasons, they should seek professional help at a local spa.

The Yunzhiqui Ladies' Beauty Club, near Zizhuyuan Park in Haidian District, has been up and running successfully for three years. The philosophy that wellness and beauty go hand in hand pervades the business's services and products, such as its wide range of pure essential oils and natural botanical extracts that can boost mood while leaving skin soft, bright and beautiful.



Deep tubs promise total relaxation.

Yunzhiqui offers customers a tantalizing selection of massages, facial treatments and body wraps, priced from 100 yuan to 800 yuan. The wraps are particularly luxurious, lasting a full four hours. Customers can even get their special needs attended to with the facility's "partial spa" treatments targeted at eyes, hands, feet or wherever help is needed the most.

Regardless of treatment choice, Yunzhiqui provides a warm and serene environment to forget the stresses of the world and truly let go in the experienced hands of professionals. "The staff is very knowledgeable and attentive. Whenever I feel exhausted I come here. I can relax and my skin is much healthier and better than it used to be," gushed Gao Jian, a club member of over one year.

Where: Room 306. Hua'ao Center, west of Zizhuzhao intersection on West Third Ring Road, Haidian **Open:** 9 am - 10 pm **Tel:** 6842 7216, 6843 2462

Photos by Wen Bin / Dong Jiang



Essential and aromatherapy oils can have almost magical effects.

Royal Treatment at Lay Prices

By Iris Miao

Women up for a more rigorous rub than normally available in the capital should head to the Herb and Spring SPA Salon on Women's Day to enjoy a rigorous Swedish massage.

This new special treatment starts with a milk bath followed by a strong yet soothingly rhythmic massage. To ensure customers get the most out of their rubs, the masseuses also use Galousie, a French aromatherapy oil that is 100 percent non-allergenic and can be applied directly to skin instead of massage oil.

Like this spa's other treatments, the Swedish massage is concluded by sipping on tasty, nutritious vegetable and fruit soup and flower tea that owner Luo Yiyi brought back from Europe herself. The soup is meant as a restorative, as spa clients are instructed not to arrive with full stomachs and can sweat very heavily during fragrant oil baths and other purifying treatments.

Herb and Spring offers a standard of quality that separates it from the spa pack. The two products used for facials, from French brands Yonka and le Parier, are 100 percent natural and made from plant extracts. For non-members, these top-notched facials are priced at 200 yuan to 1,000 yuan per service.

Unique to this establishment is the Always in Style (AIS) service. Luo, a former rhythm dance champion in Taipei who was named one of the ten most influential people in the beauty and cosmetics industry in 2003, brought the concept to Beijing eight years ago.

"To put it simply, AIS means giving a customer professional advice on choosing the colors, hairstyle, make-up and clothes that best suit her," Luo explained to *Beijing Today* on Monday.

Where: No. 103, Building 3, Soho, 179 Jianguo Lu, Chaoyang **Open:** 9:30 am - 10 pm **Tel:** 6567 7756 (Reservations required)

House of Healing

By Lisa Lee

Despite its unusual location in a three-bedroom flat in high-end apartment complex Yonghe Jiayuan, the cozy Aibei'er Spa Centeryet is a bonafide full-service health and beauty center.

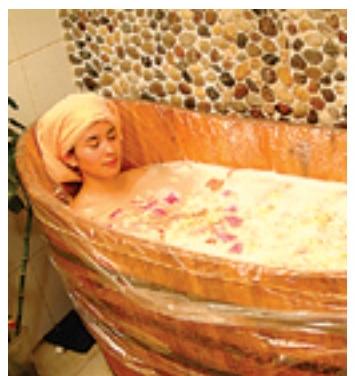
The living room serves as the beauty consultation area, while the bedrooms are used for face and body treatments.

Every good session should start with a stress-melting bath, enhanced by aromatherapy and hydrotherapy treatments. What better way to enjoy Women's Day than by soaking in a deep wooden tub filled with warm, fresh water topped with floating rose petals as quiet music plays in the background? The restorative power of such a bath can be enhanced by the addition of a few drops of essential oils, capable of doing wonders for the body and mind. Different oils have different properties and functions, and the spa's professional therapists can design concoctions to meet individual customer's needs. The cost for a session of beneficial bathing is 280 yuan and the therapists' help comes free.

The next step in treating the body right is a body wrap, available in detoxification, aromatherapy and other versions. The wrapping process consists of applying seaweed, aromatherapy oils or other exotic materials to draw out toxins and rejuvenate skin, then wrapping thick, heated towels around the body to seal in the materials' benefits. Depending on variety and ingredients, body wraps range in price from 100 yuan to 360 yuan.

The climax of the spa experience comes with a full-body professional massage. Aibei'er's masseuses start customers with warm neck wraps and command a host of techniques to help reduce stress, alleviate soreness and tap tension from tired muscles. Try the highly recommended reflexology foot massage, 120 yuan for a soothing 60 minutes.

Where: Room 102, Building 6, Yonghe Jiayuan, Dongbinhe Road, Dongcheng **Open:** 10 am - 10 pm **Tel:** 6102 6781, 6102 6991



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The Fastest Way to a Woman's Heart

By Chen Si/Yu Shanshan
International Women's Day is a day not only to recognize the contributions of women, but also a fine time to treat them to a fine meal. Below, seven local men share their plans for pleasing the stomachs of the women they love.

Zhang Han, high school student

My mother works very hard every day. Before she heads to work she makes me breakfast and she fixes dinner when she gets home. So, I'm going to cook *zhou* (congee) for her on Women's Day to say thanks for all she does for me.

Congee is very nutritious and easy enough to make that I can handle it. The *zhou* I plan to make will contain red dates, wolfberries, glutinous rice and brown sugar, all of which are good for my mom's health.

Duan Xi, 29, manager of a software company

My wife and I are normally really busy and rarely have time to have dinner together at home. So for March 8, I want to cook some rabbit, because it's her favorite. Rabbit meat is mild tasting and good for nourishing the blood. I plan to decorate the dish with some edible flowers, such as chrysanthemums, roses and honeysuckle to make it look and taste better.

Xue Liming, 33, advertising rep

I'm a pretty bad cook, so I plan on treating my wife to an elegant dinner out on March 8. I've already reserved a table at the Zhuji Liangtang Restaurant in Yayuncun, a place that is famous for its soup.

The restaurant has some soups that are especially good for women. My wife is a bit weak, so I hope the nutritious soups will benefit her health. I'll round out the meal with a few light dishes made of things like tofu, bean sprouts and yellow eel.

Wang Zhen, 28, department manager at a foreign company

I plan on cooking pig trotters for my girlfriend because they're very nutritious and she loves them. Pig trotters are especially beneficial for the skin.

Cheng Liang, 45, teacher

My wife and I love seafood, in part because it's rich in nutrition but low in fat. So I'm going to treat her to a meal at a seafood restaurant to show her I hope she'll be healthy and beautiful forever. I'll also order some light dishes with mushrooms, asparagus and things like that.

Zhang Jiwei, 25, student at Beijing Broadcasting University

My girlfriend is obsessed with Murakami Haruki's novels. To get her away from his books, I'm going to prepare some foods that appear in the novels, such as spaghetti and sandwiches. My personal specialty, and her favorite, is fried rice with salmon, seaweed and mushrooms.

For the special day, I'm going to make what I call "Murakami" ice cream — I blend hazelnuts into vanilla ice cream and then pour red wine over it.

Yu Guoying, 50, reporter for Guangming Daily

My wife's favorite kind of soup is *suanlatang* (hot and sour soup). I think it's too normal, but she loves it, especially the tofu, bamboo shoot and lily buds inside. So, I figure I'll give her what she wants.

Almond Joys

By Xiao Rong

Almonds are rich in a wide spectrum of nutrients, from protein and carbohydrates to unsaturated fatty acids, vitamins and many minerals. Though they sound bad, unsaturated fats are particularly valuable, as they can speed the absorption of harmful fats from the body.

These nuts are also chock full of vitamin E, an antioxidant that can slow the signs of aging and keep women (and men) beautiful and healthy.

Scientific research has shown that almonds contain nearly no cholesterol, while their high unsaturated fatty acid content can actually help cut cholesterol levels in the blood. And, of course, they are delicious. With all this going for them, almonds are a perfect ingredient for a special Women's Day treat.

Almonds with Kumquat and Fresh Ginger

These nuts make healthy, tasty snacks and are especially nice served along side tea or cocktails.

Ingredients:

100 g almond
10 g orange peel
125 ml orange juice
25 g dried kumquat
50 g sugar
10 g fresh ginger slices

Procedure:

Cut three-quarters of the orange peel into chunks and keep the rest for garnish. Chop the ginger slices into small triangles.

Cook the orange juice and sugar in a small sauce pan for one minute until the sugar dissolves and the juice thickens. Then add the orange peel and ginger and cook for 30 seconds. Toss the almonds into the mix and cook for one or two minutes, stirring, until all almonds are thoroughly coated with the sauce.

Put almonds onto a plate to cool, separating them to prevent them from sticking together. Add dried kumquat to cooled almonds, mix and serve.

Almonds with Dried Sweet Potato

This snack is an ideal match for green tea.

Ingredients:

100 g almond
20 g dried sweet potato
200 g sugar
1 tsp sesame seeds

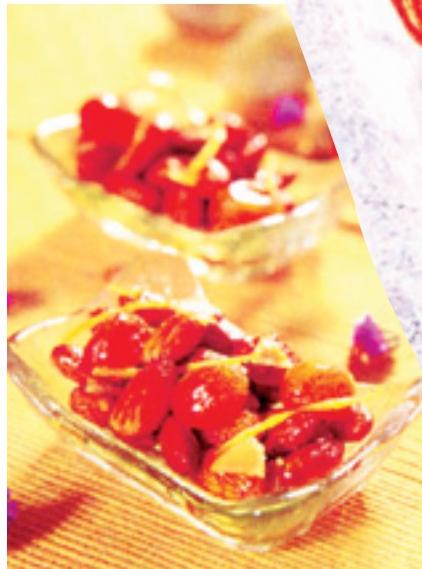
Procedure:

Put sugar and about one-quarter cup water in a pan and cook over medium-high heat for six to seven minutes until the sugar is sticky and caramelized.

Add the almonds and toss for one to two minutes in the sugar mixture until completely coated. Turn off the heat, then add the sesame seeds and chunks of dried sweet potato and mix thoroughly.



Almonds with dried sweet potato



Almonds with kumquat and fresh ginger

Cool Noodles, Hot Flavors

By Xiao Rong

Though the chill of winter has yet to finally leave the air, clear skies and budding trees indicate spring is right around the corner. That means it is nearing time to dust off the warm weather clothes, crack open the windows and start entertaining thoughts of cooling fare, such as cold noodles. Beijingers have long had a reputation for loving foods served at room temperature or below and this city continues to offer a tremendous variety of cold noodle options sure to quench any internal fire and please any palate.

Arguably the best-known cold noodles in this city are the Korean version. However, digging a little deeper can turn up many other varieties, such as Japanese iced noodles, Sichuan-style spicy cold noodles, Beijing-style noodles with fried bean sauce (*zhajiangmian*) and Shanghai-style cold noodles served with green onions (*congyou banmian*).

Sichuan cold noodles

Most Sichuan restaurants offer this delectably spicy dish, called *Sichuan liangmian*, normally go for no more than 3 yuan to 5 yuan per bowl. However, not all *liangmian* is created equal and there are some tricks to discerning a superior bowl.

First, the noodles can come in two colors, translucent white or yellow. Though both are made from regular flour, the latter may be artificially colored, meaning steer towards clear.

A more crucial characteristic of a good bowl of *liangmian* is the texture. The noodles should be nice and chewy, a result only achieved by cooking them in the proper amount of vigorously boiling water to allow them to expand while not sticking together.

The noodles must be removed from the water at just the right time. They are then allowed to drip dry, laid on a wide chopping block to cool, and coated with cooked rapeseed oil to prevent them from getting sticky.

Once the kitchen has



Sichuan cold noodles



Korean cold noodles



Japanese ice noodles

Photos by Li Shuzhuan

10:30 pm Tel: 8598 8912

Huang'apo Chongqing Restaurant

Where: No. 19, Gaoliangqiao Xiejie, Haidian Open: 10:30 am – 2 pm; 4:30–10pm Tel: 6218 8508

Bayu Renjia Restaurant

Where: Wanshou Lu, Haidian Open: 10 am – 2 pm, 5–9pm Tel: 6816 1573

Korean cold noodles

Bathed in a lightly spicy, slightly sweet soup and topped with fresh vegetables and sometimes meat, eggs or fruit, Korean cold noodles are a refreshing and nutritious meal to themselves.

Koreans have been eating cold noodles for hundreds of years, which are traditionally served at holidays and celebrations as symbols of happiness and longevity.

Since 1999, cold noodles have been one of the few routes of open economic cooperation between North and South Korea, as people in Seoul, in particular, have developed insatiable appetites for the cold noodles of their northern neighbors.

While they may look simple, Korean cold noodles are difficult to make and come in many varieties. Whether made of wheat, buckwheat, maize, sorghum or sweet potato flour, the noodles are made by first forming a thick dough which is cut into thin stripes and boiled. The cooked noodles are rinsed in cold water and then are ready for eating.

These noodles have a distinctive tough, gummy texture that matches well with meaty or crunchy toppings such as slices of cooked pork, beef or chicken, sesame seeds, julienne strips of chili pepper, and slices of apple or pear for a contrasting sweet kick.

Cold noodles are available all over town, from small specialized hole-in-the-walls and mall food courts to upscale Korean restaurants. In fact, nearly every Korean joint in town has them on the menu, so there is no need to shell out too much.

Recommendations:

Chuanfu Restaurant

Where: West wing of No. 2 building, Xinzhongjie, Dongcheng Open: 9:30 am – 10 pm Tel: 6416 9575

Meizhou Dongpo Restaurant

Where:

No. 1 Building, Tuanjiehu Dongli, Yaojiaoyuan Lu, Chaoyang Open: 10 am –

Donglu, Beitaipingzhuang, Haidian Open: 9:30 am – 11 pm Tel: 8201 5678

Xiongjia Shaokao

Where: West gate of Xijiao Hotel, Wudaokou, Haidian Open: 10 am – 11 pm Tel: 6239 5521

Meiali Shaokao

Where: No. 1–4, Fugang Lu, Fangchengyuan, Fangzhuang, Fengtai Open: 10 am – 2 pm, 5–11pm Tel: 6760 9626

Yuxiangyuan Korean Restaurant

Where: First floor of Huaheng Building, Nanbinhe Lu, Guang'anmen Wai, Xuanwu Open: 11 am – 10:30 pm Tel: 6326 6497

Shanfu Restaurant

Where: Jia 58, Deshengmen Xidajie, Xicheng Open: 11 am – 10 pm Tel: 6618 0362

Hanyangge Barbecue

Where: No. 131, Chaoneixiaojie, Dongcheng Open: 10 am – 10 pm Tel: 8401 2766

Japanese ice noodles

Riding the coattails of the city's love for Korean cold noodles, the Japanese version is a food on the rise. Outside of some local Japanese restaurants, good choices for trying these refreshing and light noodles are outlets of the Mian Ai Mian chain.

These semi-fast-food restaurants offer a Japanese ice noodle set that comes in three parts, a box, a plate and a bowl. The wooden box contains light yellow noodles topped with diced green onion and slices of kelp. Inside the bowl is a tasty, complex sauce cooled down with some ice cubes. The plate is covered with strips of cucumber, grilled pork, dark edible fungus and fresh spring noodles.

Diners have two choices for tucking into the attractive array before them — the noodles can be picked up and then dipped into the sauce, or they can be put on top of the veggies, covered with sauce and all mixed together.

Recommendation:

Mian Ai Mian Chain Store

Where: No. 23, Fuxing Lu, Haidian Open: 7:30 am – 11:30 pm Tel: 6815 3711

Activities

Beijing Hikers

Start the hike by walking up a lane to a small village nestled in a valley in Miyun, north east of Beijing. Then walk up over the hills to Stonewall Village. The name came from the hill behind it. It has gray rocks on the bald hill. It is a safe walk that can be done by all ages.

Where: meet 8:30 am at Lido Hotel outside Starbucks **When:** February 7, 8:30 am **Admission:** 200 yuan **Tel:** 13910025516

YPHH Wine Tasting at Centro

The second Young Professionals Happy Hour wine tasting at Centro, the lobby bar of the Kerry Centre Hotel. Again you will have the chance to taste wines of the five continents (one of each). Centro provides hot and cold canapes and snacks. During the evening singer Laverne Butler will perform live.

Where: lobby of the Kerry Centre Hotel, Guanghua Lu **When:** March 10, 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm **Admission:** 100 yuan **Tel:** 6561 8833

Family Shadow Puppet Museum

Visit a newly built shadow puppet museum inside the new

home of veteran shadow puppeteer Chu, and watch a show on their home-style stage.

Where: pick up at Durty Nellie's Irish Pub, between Sunflower Tower and Kempinski Hotel **When:** March 6, 2 pm – 5 pm **Admission:** 80 yuan (60 yuan for students) **Tel:** 8462 2081

Sing-along

Join the Chinese Culture Club's monthly singing workshop. Sit with a guitar player in an informal setting and learn some typical Chinese folk and pop songs — and then impress your friends when going to karaoke! The carefree singing event is set in a cozy environment. Handouts of words of the songs in English, Chinese and pinyin are available.

Where: pick up in Durty Nellie's Irish Pub, between Sunflower Tower, and Kempinski Hotel **When:** March 7, 2:30 pm – 4 pm **Admission:** 50 yuan **Tel:** 8462 2081

Annual Tenbridge Charity Ball

Choose carefully as this year's theme is 'Heaven and Hell'. All proceeds go to Operation Blessing's Educational Projects.

Where: Hilton Hotel **When:** March 6, 7 pm **Tel:** 8580 1755

Movies



Hsu Chi and Liu Ye

Meiren Cao (Years without Epidemic)

A tragic love story between 26-year-old Ye Xingyu and Liu Si-meng, set in the 1970s in Yunnan. Directed by Lui Lok, starring Hsu Chi and Liu Ye. (In Chinese).

Where: cinemas across town **When:** till March 14

Zhi Feiji (Paper Airplane)

A documentary recording the lives of members of a newly formed rock band and their artist friends. (In Chinese). Produced by Zhao Liang.

Where: Hart Salon, 17 Sanlitun Nanjie (across from Durty Nellie's), Chaoyang District **When:** March 6, 8 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan (includes one drink) **Tel:** 6504 6010

Bawang Bieji (Farewell My Concubine)



In 1924 Beijing, the youthful Douzi and Shitou are brought together under the thumb of the strict master of a small acting troupe. Thirteen years later, their suffering has paid off. Douzi, now going by the name of Cheng Dieyi (Leslie Cheung),

Stage



Musical: Atlantic Affairs

Set in Germany in the 1930s, when many renowned artists including Thomas Mann, Bertold Brecht, Billy Wilder, Kurt Weill and others fled to New York and Shanghai, seeking refuge from Nazi persecution. All the songs were popular during the 1920s and 30s, but have been re-interpreted as rock music. Starring Udo Lindenberg and Cui Jian.

Where: Beijing Exhibition Theater, 135 Xizhimenwai Dajie **When:** March 5 7:30 pm **Admission:** 80 – 880 **Tel:** 6835 4455

Drama:

Beijie Nanyuan (North Street, South Yard)

Collection of several touching stories set in a quarantined courtyard in Beijing last summer, during the SARS epidemic. Starring Zhu Xu, Lu Zhong, He Bing, Pu Cunxin and Yang Lixin.

Where: Capital Theater, 22 Wangfujing Dajie **When:** February 5, 7 7:30 pm **Admission:** 80 – 280 yuan **Tel:** 6524 9847



Exhibitions

Pictures from the Surface of the Earth

Wim Wenders is a multi-faceted artist: an engraver, painter, actor, writer and one of the most successful contemporary filmmakers. Now 50 panoramic pictures are on show in Beijing. Subjects of his camera includes small towns or landscapes in the US, Cuba's capital Havana, forests and temples in Japan, Jerusalem, the coast of Galilee and deserted expanses of the Australian outback.

Where: China Millennium Monument Art Museum, 9A Fuxing Lu **When:** till March 21, 8:30 am – 6 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan **Tel:** 6851 3322

Ten Painters' Exhibition

Features works from ten oil paintings including Hong Ling, Ji Dachun, Leng Jun, Mao Yan, Sun Liang, Wei Qimei, Yan Ping, Wei Ershen, Yang Feiyun and Yu Xiaofu. Most of their works are traditional in style.

Where: Soka Art Gallery, Room 101, Building B, Tianhai Shangwu Dasha, 107 Dongsi Beidajie **When:** till March 26, Tuesday – Sunday, 9 am – 5 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6406 5477

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Music

China National Symphony Orchestra Concert

China National Symphony Orchestra performs Beethoven's *Egmont Overture*, Brahms' Piano Concerto No. 1 and Schumann's Symphony No. 4, conducted by Maurice Peress.

Where: National Library Concert Hall, 33 Zhongguancun Nandajie **When:** March 6, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 50 – 380 yuan **Tel:** 6848 5462

Concert by Three Renowned Musicians

Top female musicians Yu Lin (violin), Bao Huiqiao (piano) and Min Huifen (erhu) perform their representative works including *Butterfly Lovers*, *The*

Jams



Shazi (Sand)

Blues band Shazi (Sand) play at What? tonight.

Where: What? Bar, 72 Beichang Jie **When:** March 5, 9 pm **Admission:** 20 yuan **Tel:** 13910209249



Beautiful Pharmacy

Jazz and folk band Meihao Yaodian (Beautiful Pharmacy) plays together with Xiaofang he Jingzi (Xiao Fang and Mirror) and Zhou Yunpeng.

Where: Nameless Highland, Building 14, Anhui Area 1, Yuyuncun, 200 meters north of the Yuyuncun Hospital intersection **When:** March 6, 9 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan (20 yuan for students) **Tel:** 6489 1613



Night of Rock

Heavy metal masters Tangchao (Tang Dynasty) and grunge kings Lengxue Dongwu (Cold Blooded Animals) play at Get Lucky.

Where: Get Lucky, 1 Dongfang Qicai Dashijie, Laitai Jie Chaoyang district **When:** March 6, 9:30 pm **Admission:** 80 yuan **Tel:** 8448 3335

Yellow River and The Water of Rivers and Lakes

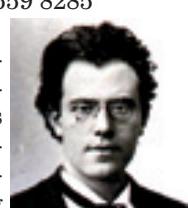
Conducted by Zheng Xiaoying.

Where: Forbidden City Concert Hall, Inside Zhongshan Park, Xi Chang'an Jie **When:** March 6, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 80 yuan – 500 yuan **Tel:** 6559 8285

Mahler

China Philharmonic Orchestra performs Mahler's Symphony No. 3, conducted by Yang Yang.

Where: Poly Theater, Dongzhimen Nandajie **When:** March 7, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 50 – 380 **Tel:** 6500 1188



Landscape by Wim Wenders



Huailai -

Travel Back in Time



The remains of the western wall and gate of Jimingyi (above) and the east wall (top).

By Wang Xiaoxiao

There is a saying in China "Go to Shanghai if you want to see the history of 100 years ago, go to Beijing to see the history of 200 years ago, go to Xi'an to see the history of 1,000 years ago, and go to Zhuolu (涿鹿) to see the history of 2,000 years ago."

Zhuolu, in Hebei Province is one of the cradles of Chinese civilization. There are no green mountains or valleys, but the yellow earth and gray houses speak eloquently of ancient Chinese culture.

The mountains to the northwest of Beijing form a series of gorges, which in ancient times became the main routes by which nomadic tribes attacked Beijing and the rich lands to the south. During the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), fortifications such as beacon towers, walls and forts were constructed along these gorges, connecting the towns and postal facilities, or "daks," which served as both mail distribution centers and safe places of accommodation for mail carriers.

Among these fortifications, Huailai Fort (怀来城), Jimingyi (鸡鸣驿), or Jiming Dak and Guang'entun (广恩屯兵营) are the most famous, for they all stand at key locations geographically and were primary targets for invaders trying to penetrate into the outer defences of the empire.

Woniushan (卧牛山), or Crouching Ox Mountain, stands at the narrowest point of Guangting Reservoir. The bricks that litter the mountain here and there and the magnificent wall are remnants of Huailai Fort, which has a history of over a thousand years. Originally built in the Tang Dynasty (618-907), it became known as Huailai

during the Liao Dynasty (916-1125).

Woniushan, in the middle of Huailai Basin and at the narrowest point from east to west, is an ideal location for a fort. However, most of the fort stood on the west side of the mountain, which was flooded when Guangting Reservoir was built in the 1950s.

Entering the Woniushan area, you will see a temple called Taishan on the top of the mountain. After walking across a suspension bridge, you will be on the eastern side of the mountain. A number of old pagodas and stone steles can be seen inside the temple.

To the west of the mountain area lies a small town, of which the houses, city gate and blockhouses are built in the style of the late Qing Dynasty or early Republican Period. The water lily pool on the west side of the mountain makes a romantic place for a walk in summer.

Jimingshan (鸡鸣山) or Rooster Crowing Mountain, rises abruptly from the middle of the plain and somewhat resembles a large tomb, due to its flat peak.

According to legend, Tang Tai Tsung (the first emperor of the Tang Dynasty) one day heard the crowing of a heavenly rooster when he stayed at the mountain foot, which is how the mountain came to be so named.

Jimingshan has an unusual shape and for this reason was regarded as a holy mountain by locals, who over the centuries have built several temples on its slopes.

At the foot of Jimingshan is Jimingyi, reputedly the largest and best preserved postal dak in China and the last station along this route before Beijing. It was first built during the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368), but in 1420, during the Ming Dynasty, it was enlarged.

The surrounding walls are 12 meters high and over two meters thick. Like a traditional old city, the dak has four gates. Today there are three streets within the walls, ten temples and some shops and residences.

The north and south gates are in ruins. Above the east and west gates are two buildings that served as watchtowers. The southern wall has almost disappeared and the bricks of the west wall have collapsed, leaving the clay core exposed to the elements.

Entering the west gate, you can see on the left several old clay houses without roofs. Local officials are reportedly drawing up plans to restore the buildings, and residents in those houses that remain habitable have been told to stop painting or rebuilding them.

Jimingyi's greatest claim to fame is that Dowager Empress Cixi and Emperor Guangxu stayed there, in the home of He'er, a wealthy landlord, when they were fleeing Beijing in 1900.

It is an ideal location for filming period dramas, with its old houses and yellow walls that are so typical of China's north west. *The Decisive Engagement* and *The Battle of Tai'er Zhuang*, among others, were filmed here, and the last scene of the classic comedy, *A Chinese Odyssey*, where Stephen Chow kisses Athena Chu, was shot on one of the gates of Jimingyi.

A little way to the west is Guang'entun, which was an important barracks in the Ming Dynasty. Guang'entun is not big, with a width of only 200 meters. The south gate is still in a good condition, however the north gate has collapsed. South of the barracks stands a tiny temple, which has still-intact Ming frescoes on the walls of the two main halls.

Photos by Sun Haitao

Getting there:

Head north along the Badaling Expressway (八达岭高速) and take the Yanqing exit. Continue along national highway 110. After leaving Yanqing, you will be in Huailai County, Hebei Province. Soon the picturesque Guangting Reservoir will appear on the left. Turn left onto a rough road when you see a sign reading "Woniushan Fengqingqu" (Crouching Ox Mountain Area). Continue along this road and you will come to Woniushan and Huailai City.

Further along national highway 110, you will see Jimingshan (Rooster Crowing Mountain) in the distance. Continue until you see the walls of Jimingyi on the left side of the road. If you do not plan to visit Woniushan, drive along Badaling Expressway until the Jimingyi Exit.

Head west after Jimingyi and take the left turns at two Y intersections. You will eventually come to Zhuolu. Drive south after Zhuolu, turn left at Gaobao (高堡), and drive along the Gaoxing Road (高杏公路) on the south bank of Sanggan River (桑干河). Turn left when you see Guang'entun, at the foot of a long hill, and enter the village. From there, you can visit Guang'entun and the little temple with beautiful frescoes.

Drive along the Gaoxing Road and turn left at Fanshan (矾山), and you'll be on the road back to Beijing.



Jimingyi , from the east gate.



The home of He'er, where Dowager Empress Cixi and Emperor Guangxu once spent the night.

Tips:

Take plenty of water with you. Although you can buy bottled water in the villages along the way, the quality tends to vary.

This region is almost desert. The wind can be fierce (and sand-filled) and the temperature is usually several degrees lower than in Beijing, so be sure to dress appropriately.

Many of the roads around Huailai are in a poor state of repair, and are traversed by a steady stream of heavily or over-loaded coal-carrying trucks from Shanxi Province, so take your time and drive carefully.